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THE
WOMAN OF LETTERS;
OR, THE
History of Miss FANNY BELTON.

VOL. I.

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Vol. 15

THE
WOMAN OF LETTERS;
OR, THE
History of Miss FANNY BELTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

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P R E F A C E

T O T H E

R E A D E R.

By the LADY to whom the Letters were written.

AS the incidents, as well as sentiments, in the following series of letters, are strictly virtuous and delicate, I presume to recommend them to the protection of my own sex, and to the candid indulgence

VOL. I.

A

with

ii P R E F A C E.

with which men of taste and genius peruse the productions of a female pen.

To point out how *calamity* should be supported by *virtue*, and to serve for an example, that neither great talents, prudence, genius, nor the best disposition the human heart is capable of, are of themselves sufficient to defend us against the inevitable ills that are often allotted for the best, is one of my motives in publishing these letters; and that they may be a warning to the *distressed*, how far they encourage a *taste* for *letters* solely, to the detriment of that *industry* alone, which, when employ'd in what is *useful* and *beneficial* to *society*, constitutes the true riches of this world, is my other motive.

The

P R E F A C E. iii

The unfortunate writer of these letters, (now presented to the public) has been many years dead; and I can with truth assert, that there is not a single person alluded to in the whole work, that has not, long since, been consign'd to the grave. I particularly mention this, lest some trying calamities in which our poor Heroine was involv'd, should draw a reflection on any one living.

It may be necessary to inform the reader, that my friendship with this admirable woman began at a very early age. My father, who was a man of large fortune, had purchas'd an estate, with some mines of great value, in the neighbourhood of those very mountains in Wales, where the worthy old clergyman, the father of

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my dear friend, had long resided, a pattern of all virtue and primitive piety.

On my accompanying my father some time after to Madras, where he was honour'd with a public employment, I begg'd my amiable young friend (to be torn from whom, I thought, at that early period of my life, was the most grievous of calamities) to send me, by every ship, a journal of her time, or a kind of little diurnal register of every thing that happen'd:—she complied with my request (though not journal-wise) of writing such a continu'd series of letters, as inform'd me of every particular of her life.—Those letters she sent off to India, in large packets, as the ships set out.

Some

P R E F A C E. v

Some persons may perhaps object, that our heroine, whose life was one continu'd series of suffering virtue, was not, to use a common phrase, "*made happy at last*:" to this I answer, I did not write these memoirs; it is a plain simple narrative, written from the heart, in the most artless manner, by the unfortunate sufferer herself; if we can call that person *really unfortunate*, who was able to draw from the greatest calamities in life, the inestimable treasure of all the virtues. Many people throw by a book of this kind, if the parties concern'd in it are not *made happy at last*, by a *comfortable wedding*, instead of the sad catastrophe of a *melancholy death*.

In common life, we daily see oppressed virtue still wretched, and

A 3 struggling

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struggling with misery, whilst the most worthless of mankind are enjoying comforts, and every blessing of life; but I beg leave to observe the *evils* or the *blessings* we meet with in this world, are merely *temporary*; and perhaps our *calamities* are no more intended by the Great Author of all (who does not estimate things as we do) for *punishment*, than the *pleasures* of this world for *rewards*: and by our thus estimating *both*, let us look forward for an equal distribution of *justice*, to that place *only*, where (let our station here be what it will) our lot is to be *unchangeable*. Let us remember, that *He*, who rules our fate,

“ From seeming *evil*, still educes *good*,
“ And better thence again, and better still,
“ In infinite progression.”——

Whatever

P R E F A C E. vii

Whatever fate this little work may meet with, I give it to the world, with all its faults; declaring I shall not be flatter'd by praise, nor humiliated by censure; because they can only be due to its author, who is now no more. The only part I have had in it, was adding the marginal notes; as it was impossible the writer of the letters could be at the time acquainted with those particulars herself, and they afterwards came to my knowledge by another channel; I therefore inserted them when I came to collect the letters for the press, as I thought they would illustrate some parts of the history.

I shall only observe, it is much easier to *censure* a work than to *commend* it; a very little penetration serves

viii P R E F A C E.

serves for the *first*, but it requires a great deal to point out its merits.—

Thus says Dryden ;

“ Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow ;
“ He who wou’d seek for pearls must dive be-
“ low.”

L. W.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

R E A D E R.

By the EDITOR.

King's-Bench Prison.

THE Lady to whom the following letters were written, many years since, honour'd me with her friendship: as a proof of which, she often observ'd with concern, that the talents or industry I employ'd in various matters, at that time, were not directed, or applied to, what the world calls, a *useful* purpose. In fact, an itch I had contracted for scribbling, and employing my whole time in reading

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ing the dead languages, to the detriment of my being of the least *use* to myself, or to society, induced the above-mention'd friend to tell me,
“ It was not *speculative science*, as
“ things are constituted in this present state, that makes any part of
“ the *wealth* of this world:—no—
“ (she continu'd) it is *industry* alone,
“ employ'd on articles that are useful and beneficial to *society*, that
“ constitutes the true riches of mankind. But (added she) as *example*
“ may probably have a greater weight
“ than *precept*, I will shew you a series of letters, written by an unfortunate woman in similar circumstances, who, like you, was
“ possess'd of the talent of scribbling, but with so little success,
“ that it was the source at length of her ending her days in the confines of a prison.—I intend them
“ for

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“ for the press, not only as a *warn-*
“ *ing* to all infected with this *reigning*
“ distemper, but also as a *pattern* of
“ the most exalted virtues, under
“ the extremest calamities.”

This good old Lady left her manuscript with me; which I found she had, indeed, prepar'd ready for the press. Unfortunately she died suddenly, a few weeks afterwards, by which means it has remain'd ever since in my possession, now many years; but with sorrow and shame I confess, I regarded so little the sensible advice of my worthy friend, or the *warning* and *example* her manuscript so strongly inculcates, that from a series of imprudencies and misfortunes, I am myself, at this present moment, confined within the walls of a prison, and destitute of the common necessaries of life, without
one

xii ADVERTISEMENT.

one ray of hope left of ever regaining my liberty.

As I was ruminating, the other day, on my wretched state, I form'd the design of publishing the above-mention'd manuscript, which I here present, without altering a single syllable, or making any comments on the performance. I have only to say, I wish the generous intention of my friend may be fully answered.

MARIA SMYTH.

T H E

THE
WOMAN OF LETTERS;
OR, THE
History of Miss FANNY BELTON.

LETTER I.

*Miss FANNY BELTON, to Miss LUCY
WILMOT, at MADRAS.*

Lland—e, North-Wales, July 1.

A journal of my life!—unreasonable Lucy!—Whatever events, sufficiently interesting, can daily occur, for an amusement of that kind, to a poor girl, buried among the mountains of Lland—e? You desire me to be very *minute* in my *accounts*:

counts :—but what variety of incidents can you possibly expect in my solitary situation?—Shall I tell you, I am just come from nursing a few straggling kids, who have lost their dam, on the side of the neighbouring mountain?—or that the favourite gold-finch, my dearest Lucy left me at her departure, is my hourly care?—or that I am still scribbling odes and pastorals?—In fact, these are the chief occupations of what Shakespeare calls, “This little life that’s rounded with a sleep,” which employ the innocent hours of your poor, obscure Fanny.

I might indeed tell you, (but why should I pain your gentle heart?) that the good old man, my father, still continues to starve (with your humble servant) on his curacy of twenty pounds per annum; for which he is obliged to do duty at two churches every Sunday, ten miles asunder; whilst

whilst his idle rector, who with an income of a thousand a year, besides the prebendary of —, and the deanery of —, is, as Pope says,

“ *Slumb’ring in his stall,*
“ *And leaves to tatter’d crape,*
“ *The drudgery of prayer.*”

Yes, my Lucy, the excellent man my poor father, with the piety of a saint, the simplicity of a patriarch, and with more learning, perhaps, than half the bishops in England, and I may justly add with the resolution of a martyr, still continues buried in the same spot in which you left him, without fortune, and consequently without *friends*: he is *himself* the friend, the counsellor, and physician of all the poor, within twenty miles of our cottage.—Our little garden, Lucy, the neatness of which you have often admir’d, affords pulse to all our neighbours—and a comfortable mess

of pottage, (such is our frugal œconomy) we are still able to send to the sick, and aged.

The rose-bush you planted at the bottom of the little wilderness, I visit daily;—but the path to it is wild, is melancholy—without my friend.—Tell me—and yet I almost dread to ask, how many years (ages to me) your father proposes staying at Madras.—If I might—but I am here interrupted by my dear father calling his Fanny.—I fly to obey his summons.

* * * * *

The above-mentioned good man met me with joy sparkling in his eyes, exclaiming, “Fanny, my child! I have good news to impart:—your fortune is made, I believe.—Come, (added he, taking my hand,) go with me to the ivy bench, under the old oak, and there I will tell you news.”

The

The moment we were seated, I, all impatience, begg'd to hear his good tidings.

“ You may remember (said this dear parent) that some little time ago, there was a report, that the fine ancient seat, call'd Ashgrove abbey, and the estate belonging to it, was to be purchas'd by Sir Jaspar Branville—an old school-fellow of mine—and indeed, the oldest friend I have in the world.—You know he is your godfather;—when my Fanny was born, I knew better days—your dear mother (now an angel in heaven) and I, liv'd then in the neighbourhood of Sir Jaspar, in Kent. He frequently told me, he should one day make my fortune:—and though I have now been buried fifteen years among these mountains, I have no doubt but he will remember his old friend at last.—Aye, many a good whipping-bout at school, did I endure, by taking his faults to myself;”

myself;—many an exercise at Oxford, did I make for his use;—and many a scrape there have I prevented him from falling into—or rather releas'd him from.”——

“ But, my dear Sir, (interrupted I) what is your good news?”

“ Excuse, me child, an old man's fond prattle of the days of his youth; I am now coming to the point.—As I was walking this afternoon over West Moor, about seven miles from hence, where I had been to pray by a poor woman ill of a quinsy, I met coming down the high road, a grand equipage, with a great retinue:—on enquiring of one of the servants whose it was, he inform'd me, to my inexpressible joy, that Sir Jaspar Branville was in the carriage, come to take possession of his new purchase at the abbey.—Transported with this intelligence, I ran to the coach, which
luckily

luckily happen'd just then to stop, about giving orders to the servants.— Being now at the door of the carriage, I saw my old friend, at the first glimpse :—I made my best bow, and at last (for he could not presently recollect me, on account of the alteration of my person) made myself known.”

“ Hah ! my old acquaintance (said he) Harry Belton ! how dost do ?—
“ give me your hand.—(Yes, Fanny, he took my hand) I rejoice to see you.—This happiness is unexpected
“ —when will you come and dine with me ?—But why do I talk of dining ?—when will you come and spend a week with me ?—we shall be inseparable.—How does my little god-daughter ?

“ Was not this kind ?—In short, he loaded me with professions of friendship—and would not part with me,

without a promise of spending Thursday next at the abbey; on which day, being his birth-day, there is to be a grand entertainment. Never did I see so much joy express'd in any countenance, as in my old friend's, on his first recollecting me.—In short, my child, I should never have done, were I to tell you all his kind looks, and kind words.—At parting, he gave me a most hearty shake by the hand.—What a noble soul does that man possess!—you see he scorns to forget an old friend in adversity*.—My appearance,

* The extreme simplicity, and uncommon goodness of heart (*un-bacney'd* in the ways of mankind) of the worthy Mr. Belton, deceiv'd him greatly in his opinion of the baronet, who was, to use the fashionable phrase, quite a "Man of the World;"—to which in his character was added, all the flattering falsehood of a courtier.—"My dear Sir, what can I do to serve you?" was eternally in his mouth:—the kind looks and words, which had so much transported the poor honest curate, are, alas! mighty cheap, and were the chief commodities in which this Gentleman dealt. He had lately amass'd, by the most extortionable methods,

ance, though shabby, was no objection you see, to a renewal of our old friendship:—a friendship which bids defiance to time and long distance.—But what pleas'd me more than all the rest, were his kind enquiries after thee, my child.—I am convinc'd he will do

methods, a great deal of money, with which he was going to *bribe* a neighbouring borough. In fact, a greater hypocrite never existed. The former part of his life, which was only known to our good divine, had always been decent;—and it was when he advanced in years, his avarice, and real *badness* of heart became most apparent—but those, with his other vices, he always endeavoured to hide in *smiles*.—He little deserv'd the merit poor Mr. Belton gave him of recollecting him, after so long an absence; for, in truth, he remember'd his person the moment he saw him;—and his pause, as if he had not, and for which our good man ascribed another motive, arose merely from his considering if he *should*, or *not*, at once *disown* all knowledge of him.—He well remember'd the man to whom he ow'd a thousand obligations, and had long known the difficulties he had to contend with, amidst those mountains.—His chief vices were women and wine; though one might have imagin'd, his insatiable avarice would have kept him from the *first*, and his crazy constitution from the latter. His *passion*, or rather his *god*, was *money*.

great things for us both.—If Lady Branville was in the country, you should go with me on Thursday,—but as there will be only men, it will be improper.—I have, however, thought of a scheme, which will sufficiently make known your literary talents to this dear friend.”

You well know, my Lucy, my poor father’s *foible* in thinking too highly of his Fanny’s abilities, so I need say no more on that head.

“ You shall (continued the good man) write an ode on his birth-day, in which you shall introduce our congratulations on his arrival in this country :—these, with an enumeration of his virtues, will be a good subject for your pen.”

“ Dear Sir, said I, am I capable of such a task ?”

“ Capable, child ?—highly so.—This ode I will present to him on his birth-

birth-day : it will be a pretty compliment.—He will then see,—and I am well convinc'd, will reward your merit."

Well—my friend, is not the arrival of this worthy gentleman a most happy event?—I doubt not, indeed, but that he will make the fortune of my poor father*.—I am all spirits, as you must imagine.

I know you will rejoice with me on this happy prospect, which I think cannot fail of producing something very favourable.—I don't mean, child, that my *ode* will produce these effects—but certainly this good man settling amongst us, is a most desirable event. I imagine Lady Branville will soon come down, and then I am to go to the abbey.

* It must be imagin'd, that the innocent Fanny, whose heart was simplicity itself, was as much deceiv'd in the baronet, as her father.

But at present I must hasten to conclude; for this aforesaid ode is to be no less than four sheets of large paper, setting forth the virtues of this respectable friend:—and I have also my Greek eclogues to write over fair, which are to be presented at the same time.—Heaven grant he may be a man of learning and letters, that he may have a relish for these kind of performances!—But, alas! my dear father imagines every one sees with his eyes, and judges with the same partiality.

I cannot, my Lucy, promise the journal you mention; but you may depend on my informing you of every little circumstance and event, which may happen to your Fanny; which I shall do in a continued series of letters, beginning at this time, and shall send them as the ships set out for your part of the globe. O that I could leap the
space

space which separates us!—Methinks I see you visiting about in your Palanquin*—and yet, I would lay a small wager, you would rather be running up yonder mountain, among the wild kids, with your Fanny.

Adieu.—I shall make no formal conclusion, as it is needless to say how much I am

Your's,

FRANCES BELTON.

L E T T E R II.

July 4.

WELL, Lucy—the ode is finished: it has cost me, however, two sleepless nights; but I am amply rewarded for my pains, by the commendations my dear father is pleased to bestow upon it:—though whether

* A kind of sedan chair, in which the Ladies in India make their visits.

the

the baronet will approve it, is another matter.—But genius and learning, for aught I know, may be as common among the fine folks in London, as it is as often found in the most obscure retirement. I should rather imagine lords and baronets, if they do not excel always themselves in the belles lettres, never fail to patronize learning in distressed merit*.

O Lucy, had you seen me set my father out on his little journey to the abbey, you would have been highly pleased.—He is just gone on foot,—seven long miles.—You used to tell me, you liked to see me adjusting his grey locks, and plaiting his neck-cloth—but then you never saw him so smart—quite a beau now!—To say truth, old Martha and I had yesterday been looking over his whole ward-

* This sentiment was owing to the great *simplicity* of this innocent young creature.—Time convinced her of her mistake.

robe,

robe, and we there found at last, a coat which makes a tolerable appearance. A muslin handkerchief of my own, I tied round his neck—his neck-cloths, alas! being no more.—I put a new button to his hat, and those silver buckles you gave me in his shoes; and to finish all, I ran into the garden, and gathered a little nosegay of rose-buds and sweet-briar, which I would put in his bosom.—He gave me a kiss at parting, and is set out, in the highest spirits, with a bundle of my manuscripts in his pocket—poor good man!

In his absence, my venerable companion, Martha, is going with me to visit a poor sick family; and whilst she is preparing some medicines which my father (the common physician of the village) has ordered for his patients, I will employ those minutes in endeavouring to answer your questions in a former letter, relative to an aunt
of

of mine (my mother's sister) I sometimes have mentioned.

You ask me, my dear, why she does not invite me to spend some time with her daughters, who are nearly of my age?—In truth, I can give you no other reason, than that I suppose she imagines the daughter of a poor country curate would disgrace her children; for you are to know the good lady holds her head not a little high, on the strength of having married a little country 'squire, who has since had a considerable fortune fall to him by the death of a relation; on which account she fancies herself so fine a Lady, that I assure you she has taken no notice of any of us, almost since I was a child.—I believe you have heard me say often, that my mother's was a *love-match*; and that tho' she married the *worthiest* man in the world, she irrevocably disobliged her
parents,

parents, as he had no fortune. My aunt too thought fit to shew her disapprobation of the above step.—In fact, tho' she was herself reckoned very handsome in her youth, she could never forgive my mother for two things; one, that she possessed an uncommon share of beauty; and the other, that she got married some years before *herself*, who was much older.

As to her husband, he is a meer cypher in his own house :—a very inoffensive being.—One may justly say of him what Pope was pleased to say of our sex in general,

“ That he has *no* Character at all.”

We, however, notwithstanding their neglect, have had no particular quarrel with the family ; and perhaps I am a naughty girl, for speaking in a slighting manner of the only relations I have in the world :—and to whom,
after

after all, if a deplorable event should happen, (which heaven avert!) could I fly for protection, but to this aunt? But Martha waits, so I must lay down my pen for the present.

* * * * *

[In Continuation.]

My father is return'd from the abbey—but, alas! in regard to my poetry, I fancy was disappointed.—He, poor man! believes every body sees with the same partial eyes as himself;—or perhaps he chose an improper time to present my ode *; for it seems,
on

* The amiable Fanny was right in her conjecture, though she knew not the real reason; which was, that as *money* was always uppermost in the baronet's mind, so he immediately, on poor Mr. Belton's presenting his daughter's productions of her pen, prefaced with an affecting introduction in his discourse of their distress, and of the friendship with which Sir Jasper had been pleased to honour him, the above Honourable Gentleman, at once concluded, that he was come to borrow a sum of money; indeed he hardly ever saw

on just looking carelessly at the title, he exclaimed, "And can you really, Mr. Belton, imagine this girl will ever get any thing in this world by learning and letters?—It is ridiculous to suppose it.—Greek eclogues will never get her a husband, take my word for it—nor a thousand odes make her fortune.—If the girl has memory and genius, get her upon the stage—get her upon the stage.—Has she a voice? Does she sing?—What is her figure?—Is she as handsome as her

saw a person in *low* circumstances, without harbouring such a suspicion, or a *rich* spendthrift, without hoping he was come to mortgage a part of his possessions. He was in the strictest sense, what is called a *man of the world*; which, to use the inimitable Mr. Fielding's words on this occasion, "is a man who directs his conduct in this world, as one who being fully persuaded there is no other, is resolved to make the *most* of *this*." He had always a very plentiful fund at command, and of which he knew how to make a very plentiful advantage; sometimes of the necessities of private men, and sometimes those of the public. In fact, he firmly believed nothing else in this world to be of any real use but *money*.

mother?—

mother?—The stage is the only place, I repeat, to make her fortune.—How old is she *?”

My father replied, with some emotion, “ My Fanny upon the stage!—But you cannot, Sir Jasper, be in earnest.—You are a little merry with your old friend.—My child, I thank heaven, with the talents she possesses (you will please, my Lucy, to observe it is a *fond* parent who speaks) will, I trust, have always a resource from her writings, without going on the stage.—The stage, indeed!—I should hardly think of sending so lovely a young creature into certain destruction †.”

* There was something in the behaviour of the baronet on this occasion which would have offended highly many other men; but the excellent Mr. Belton might be called *simplicity* itself. He was of that order of mortals, to whom nature hath denied the gall of passion.

† The reader will here naturally *allow* for the effusions of the fond heart of this doating parent to his old friend.

“ Indeed!

“ Indeed ! (said the baronet) is she so *very* lovely ? ”

“ The exact image of my Harriet, (replied my father) on her wedding-day ; the same bloom, the same sweetness. You remember my Harriet, my old friend, the day you gave the ball in Kent, when you came of age—she sung with your sister :—My Fanny too sings like a little angel :—She warbles her native wood notes *wild, untaught.* ”

“ Sings too, does she ? said the baronet, and how *old* is she ? ”

“ Fifteen and a half :—but then she is very tall of her age :—her mother you remember, Sir Jaspar, was tall. ”

“ This girl, (interrupted the baronet) but fifteen and a half !—indeed, —I thought she had been more—that is young—very young—I must confess, to have acquired the learning she has :—fifteen and a half !—indeed ! ”

“ Here,

“ Here my Fanny,” continued my father to me, “ the good baronet fell into a little musing.—No doubt—no doubt, but, astonished at your early literature, he was forming some little plan for our future establishment and comfort *.

“ I told him in short,” continued my father, “ that I had made your education (having no son) the chief amusement of my life; that you was perfectly acquainted with Latin and Greek, as well as French and Italian; that you had discovered an amazing thirst for letters, at a very early age:—at six, I told my old friend, I had made you my little librarian; your chief delight being in classing every book in my study, or sitting with a

* The baronet was, indeed, forming at that moment a *little* plan:—a sudden thought occurred to him, but not quite of so meritorious a nature as his poor old friend, from the goodness of his own heart, imagined.

folio before you, at an age when other children are playing with their toys. Some company coming in (for the above discourse was by ourselves) the conversation became general: but I received, the whole day, continual proofs of my worthy friend's kind notice. At dinner, my Fanny, he helped me with his own hands:— and what pleased me more than all the rest was, when I took leave to come away, he rose and wrung me by the hand, saying, in a whisper, tell my little god-daughter, I will come and thank her for her ode; the first fine evening I will take an airing, and have a fillabub in your little garden."— Was not this kind? I shall expect him in a day or two. Let old Martha, my Fanny, get the little parlour in good order; and your drawings shall be hung up:—no matter for their not having frames.—I will send for

for Goodman Grover to-morrow morning early, to mow the grafs-walk and to clip the edges, and you and I, my darling, will see and get the ivy bower in order, and tie up the honeysuckles and eglantines round the little harbour in the wilderness:—for if the day should prove warm, when we are honoured with the company of our respectable guest, he will perhaps prefer sitting there to the house.—I cannot do too much for him.”

Well, Lucy, is it not a most happy event, that this worthy Gentleman should thus remember his old friendship to my father? blessings on him say I.—Not but I was a little *nettled* at what he mentioned to the good man about the *stage*: but my father assures me he only was joking.

* * * * *

We have been turning our little cottage quite topsyturvy. The parlour

lour is decorated with a bason of flowers, and a small window-curtain of Martha's contrivance: in short, Lucy, we shall soon bid fair for elegance.—My poor father is helping to cut hedges, raking gravel over the walk which leads to the garden wicket, and seeing the lane is made in good order for Sir Jasper's carriage.

Thus far I wrote last night.—This morning my father has received a letter from our rector, in ——shire. Such a letter! what pride—and yet what meanness! my poor dear parent was a good deal hurt on perusing it; —but he justly remarked, if we have lost him for a friend, (a *Friend* though I cannot call him) it is a most lucky circumstance, that the good baronet at the abbey will more than compensate for his loss.”

Never did I read such a letter! but I will transcribe it for your perusal; it is as follows:

Mr. Belton,

I am amazed at your assurance, in asking me to raise the salary of your cure to twenty five pounds per annum; you say the distance of the churches being ten miles asunder, renders it fatiguing at your advanced time of life. What is that to me? at this present time I could have the cure served for fifteen pounds per annum: and I give you this notice, that I intend to close with the offer:—in six months time, therefore, I expect you to quit the premises; which I hope you will leave in as good repair as you found them. You mention in a former letter your having had some trifling lameness, and that walking from the separate churches was full much for your strength:—what then?
—do

—do you really expect I should find you a horse?—or allow you five pounds yearly for that purpose?—neither of which shall I do.

I shall not, however, be against giving you a recommendatory letter if you hear of a cure, such as your too sanguine hopes perhaps may dictate to you; and I give you full six months to make an enquiry, which is all the indulgence you can reasonably expect from

Your's, &c.

PAUL SABLE.

Proud man!—what a letter!—and yet this man, with this wretched parsimony, has above a thousand pounds a-year;—and married not long since a lady with twenty thousand pounds fortune.—I think Shakespeare, among his evils of life, reckons as one of the greatest,

“ The whips and scorns
“ Which patient men of the unworthy takes.”

“ Well,” said my poor father, “ God be blessed for all things.—As to the *cure* it is by no means eligible;—but I own to you, Fanny, I shall feel all the tenderness of a parent, when I leave my honest *parishioners*: they all love me—I look on them as my children. Providence, my dear daughter, will befriend us, I doubt not. Though I am growing old apace, yet I——”

Perceiving a tear glistening in his aged eye, I interrupted him.

“ My beloved father, let us rather rejoice than bestow one single thought of uneasiness on this event.—Have you not your Fanny, whose little talents you have so far cultivated, that I am convinced we cannot fail of means of support?—I will write night and day:—Nay, if that fails, I will work my fingers to the bones for you.

—I am

—I am not so very a book-worm, but I can turn my hand to other matters ; —you know our good Martha has instructed me.—We shall do well, my father,—better than ever ;—cheer then your dear heart, and let us look forward with joyful hope.”

He clasped me in his arms—we both shed tears : such tears, I believe the *rich* never enjoy. I say enjoy, because there is a luxury in the effusions of the heart on these occasions, which scenes of distress can only excite.

Soon after I said, “ I believe I have found out the real cause of Doctor Sable’s *pique*. You know, my dear father, he is remarkably fond of good eating ; and has always requested us to send him every year a large quantity of *potted moor-game*, for which this part of the country is famous, and which we have accordingly procured

C 3

him ;

him; till last year, by some accident, our annual present was forgot to be sent.—This, to such an epicure, is a fault not easily forgiven.—Depend on it, my dear Sir, I have hit on the very cause of that air of displeasure, which runs throughout his odious letter.”

My father smiled;—but, as charity is ever the most predominant principle in his guiltless bosom, told me I should never presume to *judge* of the motives that lead to the actions of others.

So much, my Lucy, for Doctor Sable.—But adieu—adieu for the present.—

Your's,

FRANCES BELTON.

LETTER

L E T T E R I I I .

July 8.

WE are in daily expectation, my friend, of a visit from this worthy baronet. Our garden is neatness itself for his reception.—I own, after all, I shall sigh when I leave this little peaceful spot. My chief regret, however, will proceed from this reason ; because, in these scenes of rural innocence, I have so often enjoy'd the company of my Lucy.

“ In yonder wood we walk'd,
“ And, by the bank of yonder brook,
“ Sat careless at our ease.”

I have no doubt but my father will soon hear of some more advantageous settlement, where—— Good Heaven, here comes indeed our noble guest!— How unfortunate is it, that my father is just gone this morning to christen

C 4

a child!

a child!—for he imagined the evening would be the time for our visiter. —What shall I do?—my cap half off! —Heavens! how I tremble!—But I must run down.

* * * * *

“ Well, Fanny, (methinks I hear my Lucy ask, “ how do you like your visiter?” Indeed, not at all.—Not but he behav’d very civil, and with great complaisance; but he has not that expression of benevolence, and openness in his countenance, which is so very apparent in my father’s, and in many of the poor peasants (the only people indeed I see) in this neighbourhood. This gentleman has what Pope calls,

“ A round, *unthinking* Face;”

and yet there appears in it, a sort of cunning—I don’t know what.—He appears to be betwixt fifty and sixty.

—I

—I ran down as I told you,—and made my best curtesy, blushing like scarlet.—He advanced, and saluted me;—telling me at the time, that as my *god-father*, he was entitled to take that liberty.—Was not this an honour?

He star'd—Indeed well he might, for I made a very aukward appearance; and I was *such* a figure!—my hair about my ears,—a little round-ear'd cap, as usual, on one side—my old sprigg'd jacket, too, (you remember it) was pinn'd carelessly.

He brought no gentlemen with him, of which I was glad; for I was ashamed enough of my rusticity, before Sir Jasper alone. He was pleas'd to compliment me on my poetry, &c.—and talked to me about the learned languages.—He ask'd me if I never read Ovid?—and that he would lend me

some new books. — Was not this kind? *

I shew'd him our garden, and my whole collection of tulips and carnations.—But, dear me, how ashamed was I, when he took hold of a lock of my hair, and told me, the fine ladies in London would give half they were worth for one of those ringlets of mine, of which I seem'd not to know the real value.

I blush'd—but answer'd innocently, though with some spirit, “Do the fine ladies then, Sir, shew any degree of care, or solicitude, for what they can derive no *merit* from?”

He seem'd, I thought, a little disconcerted.

At length my father arriv'd—overjoy'd, as you may imagine, to see his

* This old debauchee, enchanted with his *prey*, intended first to poison her mind, as he found her passion was books: but found, from her strictness of education, he must act cautiously.

old friend.—Sir Jasper made an unreasonable long visit,—stay'd till past three o'clock in the afternoon,—and then went home to dinner at that late hour.—But fine folks, I suppose, are different from the other part of the world.—My father and I sat down with great comfort, to our little simple repast of fallad and eggs. But I should observe to you, that the baronet, at parting, whisper'd something about “an angel”—I could not make out what.

* * * * *

A week has now pass'd, my Lucy, every day of which my father has been at the abbey, or his friend here with us. Surely this intimacy will produce something advantageous to my beloved parent.—Heaven grant it may!

We have had this morning another visit from the baronet; and had a long discourse upon books, the substance of which, I will endeavour to give you.

When the above gentleman came in, he found me reading a Greek Epic-tetus, and a Homer, in the same language, laying by me.

“Good heavens!” said he, “why do you let this girl, Harry, (for so he calls his old friend) pore her eyes out with these dead authors?—To what purpose filling her head thus, with what can never, in real life, be of service?—Is she to form her manners after the heroines who might, or might not exist some thousand years ago?—Her head will be full of nothing but battles, and other events that a woman has nothing to do with.”

“It is her *heart*,” replied my father, “I would form to the most-ex-
alted

alted height of virtue; which I am convinced is no where to be met with, or treated of, in so *sublime* a manner, as in those divine authors."

Here my dear father, who you know is quite an enthusiast, when Homer, or Virgil, or any of the excellent ancient authors are mention'd, talk'd very learnedly.

"Well," said the baronet, "you shall never make me believe, but that your daughter would sooner form her taste by reading some of our own modern poetry, and other elegant performances, in the English language. I am not, my friend, continued he, going to recommend improper studies: no—I would not, for the world, she should have her taste corrupted:—but, really we have a great number of elegant little histories, which would form her style,—and give her a kind of a—manner—a *sentimental*—I would,
I de-

I declare, if she was my own child, amuse her mind, sometimes, with a little *easy* writing.—I believe I have got Rousseau's *Eloisa*,—and a few others of the same kind, all written with great elegance.—Fanny, you shall come and look over my library, and chuse for yourself.”

“ I thank you, my good old friend,” said my father, “ but I can by no means approve of that *easy* kind of writing you talk of.—I know nothing of that *Eloisa* you mention; it may, or may not, have its merits:—but, in general, many of those books of amusement are written with a *dangerous* elegance.”

“ Dangerous!” said the baronet, “ why I hope you don't imagine I would give her a fondness for any such! You mistake me, Harry—you mistake me very widely.”

“ In

“In the execution of those performances,” returned my father, “there is great difficulty in drawing the characters properly.—I will venture to declare, that there are many characters to be met with, that are by no means fit for *exhibition*. If an author draws his portraits from real life in the gross, he may so blend the good, and bad qualities together, as to render them equally conspicuous; and it is to be fear’d, a young mind may lose the abhorrence of the *vices*, in a review of the *virtues*. I do not say, bad characters should not be exhibited; on the contrary, vice should be shewn: but then, its deformities should be so disposed, as to excite our contempt and hatred: for if the graces of gaiety, and the sprightliness of wit, are permitted to throw a veil over them, there is danger lest the mind, not sufficiently on its guard, should
be

be mis-led by the deception, and hence be reconcil'd to it."

"Very true—very true," said Sir Jasper: "I agree with you in thinking, it is impossible the mind of a young girl can imbibe too strict,—too severe notions of virtue.—And what does my little god-daughter (for so he often calls me) say upon this subject?"

"I do not pretend," replied I, looking down, "to be a critic; but it certainly is not sufficient, in works of amusement, that the narrative observes the prescriptions of nature and probability, unless it affords at the time, some moral instruction, that may exalt humanity, improve our ideas of virtue, and by strengthening hope, teach us to bear the calamities of life with patience and resignation."

"Upon my word," said our visiter, "you talk very sentimentally.
You

You will preach as well as your father soon.—But come, enough of books; let us take a turn in the garden*.”

The baronet read Doctor Sable’s curious letter—he desired my father would not suffer one uneasy moment upon that head;—and as good as told him, in short, his fortune was made. Blessings on this worthy knight!

We sat down in the little ivy bower, (you remember it, do you not, my Lucy?) where the above good gentleman re-iterated his promises of what he would do for my father.

“ I am very moderate, my dear friend,” said that excellent parent, “ in my desires of preferment: one

* This vile hypocrite, found his scheme of *pernicious* books, to a mind so early strengthen’d by reading the most sublime, and virtuous authors of antiquity, must be changed into other methods: methods well known to this *bad* man, whose favorite vice it was to seduce the young and innocent.

single hundred a year is the utmost of my ambition.—I am well convinced I could lay up full half that yearly for my Fanny.—I *live* but for my child,—my little darling—the delight of my soul.—If it should please heaven to spare my life, till she is settled in the world, I shall die content:—and should the great disposer of all events call me hence to-morrow, I leave her *rich*, my friend,—rich in learning, virtue,—and spotless innocence.

“ Dear Sir !” said I, weeping, “ you distress me—do not talk of dying.”—Indeed this subject was too affecting—I even thought I saw a tear glitten in the eye of our kind, benevolent friend*.

* * * * *

July 22.

A fortnight has past since I dated last. I *must* tell you that I am to go

* *Mistaken*, lovely innocent !

to

to the abbey :—I fear your Fanny will grow a proud girl.—You will wonder to hear me talk of the above-mentioned visit, but you are to know, there are some ladies (relations of Sir Jasper) come down from London, to reside some time there—very fine folks I hear. My father was there last night when they arrived;—and to day, this very day, Lucy, the good baronet has sent an invitation for us to dine there.—I say *us*, because your humble servant was particularly mention'd.—How shall I do to appear before such fine ladies?—what can I do about dress? my little straw hat, with the blue ribbons you gave me, my dear, is the top of my finery.—As Lady Branville is ill in London, I find these ladies, who are her near relations, Sir Jasper has requested to spend the summer months with him. One is, I understand, a widow, a Lady Murray;

Murray; and the other her niece, a Miss Gordon, an heiress of great fortune, who is come down for her health.—In my next, I will give you an account of my visit, which I heartily wish was over.—How do I detest such form and ceremony!—O Lucy, instead of it, that I were going to meet you at the little stile, in the copse!—Thus devoutly wishes

Your faithful

F. B.

L E T T E R IV.

TO my joy, our visit is over. I told you, my friend, I would give you some account of these fine ladies;—their conversation was by no means so agreeable as I expected to find it—very trifling indeed!—we had not one word of books; but the fashionable

fashionable topic of public amusements, dress, &c. seemed their favourite subjects, which, you will believe, to neither my father nor me could afford any entertainment.

Lady Murray appears betwixt forty and fifty; and I fancy has been handsome: but she has a look with her eyes—I never saw such a look—a sort of confident stare.—But am I not an ungrateful girl, to give my opinion in this manner of a good lady, who behaved to me with the greatest kindness and affability?—But I fancy I had raised my ideas of what (from my reading) I imagined a real fine lady *should* be, to too high a pitch of elegance of manners and refinement; perhaps beyond what does really exist in our modern fine ladies; they differ, I fancy, widely from those Grecian dames and heroines of antiquity, of which my authors are so full of their encomiums.

miums.—The race of *Andromaches*, I fear, is extinct.

The niece of Lady Murray (Miss Gordon, the great heiress) is a very sprightly young lady;—and was very affable and free to me:—not the least pride, for she got acquainted in a moment. She has the most lovely complexion imagination can form;—such beautiful red and white:—I have heard of *pale-faced* ladies of quality, but the sweet bloom of Miss Gordon makes that sentiment ill-grounded. She is certainly very handsome, but yet she wants, in my poor opinion, that expressive sensibility of countenance—that animation of features, which is the most powerful charm.

O Lucy, if you had seen the head-dresses of these fine ladies—a yard high at least—powdered and curled to such a degree! what a ridiculous fashion! astonishing to me that they
do

do not imagine the most elegant dress derives its greatest beauty from neatness and simplicity. They stared upon me—my awkward figure, and homely garment (a clean linen gown) they doubtless thought plain enough;—and, in good truth, their dress appeared as strange to me.

How I blushed when I was presented to them!—the baronet made me so ashamed!

“ See, ladies, my pretty god-daughter”—he was pleased to say.

They made me many flattering compliments; and Sir Jasper told Miss Gordon she must tell me how to manage those artless ringlets (as he called them) that hung in my neck; and she very obligingly said, she would do every thing in her power to serve me. Kind, was it not?

She is, I find, a vast fortune. Lady Murray appeared so delighted with
my

my father, that (on his leaving the room to take a turn in the garden) she told Sir Jasper, she would herself speak to the bishop of W—— for some preferment. In short, Lucy, we are *made*.

Bless me!—what have we here?—an elegant carriage!—the ladies, the ladies—I throw down my pen—imagine my confusion—Martha where are you? the poor soul is gone out, how unfortunate!

* * * * *

Our noble visitors, all condescension, were pleased to express they were delighted with our little cottage:—they ran into every corner of the house and garden: I culled the choicest nosegays for each of my most beautiful carnations;—and they had a fillabub in the ivy bower.—Miss Gordon was in high spirits, and says I must come and spend a night or
two

two at the abbey with her:—I am to sleep with her. What an honour!—in short, she is all affability.—The good lady Murray took my hand, and talked to me in so kind and maternal a manner, that I was quite affected. The worthy baronet was with them:—he began a little romping with Miss Gordon, and with me, while the old lady and my father were deeply engaged in a conversation about some religious matters. — Adieu—we are going to-morrow to return this visit.

* * * * *

August 8.

Ten days, my sweet friend, have passed, in not one of which have I had time to take up my pen, as the above ladies have been often here, or we at the abbey. I have not yet passed a night there. Miss Gordon is almost angry with my *formality*, as

VOL. I. D she

she calls it; but my father has a cold hanging about him, and does not appear in perfect health:—not that he is ill, but he seems rather low in spirits, on which account I cannot bear to leave him—as the prattle of his Fanny may be some little amusement *.

* * * * *

Sir Jasper has just called here, to tell us he intends taking the ladies, now the weather is fine, to see some

* It may be imagined, perhaps, that the good man had seen something in the behaviour of the baronet, with regard to his daughter, which might have awakened his suspicions, and consequently made him very unhappy:—but, in truth, the simplicity, the rectitude, and purity of his uncorrupted heart, was so great, that the least shadow of such a thought had never entered his head. He had in reality all the *simplicity*, as well as all the *learning* of a *parson Adams*. The vile wretch, whom he believed his friend, was too *artful* to take any freedoms, but of the most innocent kind. He knew the severity of virtue, in which the lovely girl had been educated—and found his diabolical plot must be carried on with great circumspection.

of

of the gentlemen's seats in the neighbouring county, particularly the castle of Llandardy, which is esteemed a curious work of antiquity:—and he desires my father will let me partake of this little jaunt, as there will be a corner of their coach to spare; and such another opportunity may possibly never offer. Indeed, I am much obliged to the baronet for thinking of me on this occasion.—He says the ladies will not be refused,—and my father, as you will imagine, with great pleasure assented to this proposal.—He now seems perfectly to have recovered his late lowness, and cold, so that I can have no objection, as the baronet has promised I shall return in the evening.

* * * * *

A message from the abbey, to inform me Monday is the day fixed for

D 2

our

our little excursion.—I heartily wish my dear father could be of the party, as my pleasure would be heightened if he could partake it with his Fanny: but, unfortunately, the baronet has fixed on a day in which my father is engaged, being obliged to attend a funeral at his other church.

We are to dine on Monday, it seems, in the fine park belonging to Lord M——, at Fair-wood Hall. A cold collation is to be carried, which Miss Gordon desires may be quite in the rural taste, as she is very fond of the country.—It will be a delightful excursion! We are to set out early.—I assure you, my Lucy, I think I am not a little *honoured* with being made one of this agreeable party.

Adieu—I have a number of little things to do, therefore I know you will

will at present excuse a longer letter,
from

Your affectionate,
and very happy,
FANNY.

L E T T E R V.

Friday, Aug. 14.

O MY friend! how shall I sufficiently execrate this vile—this shocking wretch!—this horrid Branville?—Alas! the excursion he proposed was only the most wicked plot, that can be imagined, to seduce your poor Fanny,—who, but for the intervention of a wonderful providence, which enabled me to escape from the horrid wretch, must—must have been inevitably ruined!—Yes, praised be Heaven, I am *innocent, unsullied*.—But, ah! my Lucy, what words can

I find to paint my excess of grief, at finding, on my return, my poor, my dear, deceived parent extremely ill!—I fear dangerously so—a violent fever.—I am almost distracted.—I am watching by his bed-side, like a frantic creature.—Whilst he is dropt in a slumber, I take up my pen to inform you of these shocking particulars.—O, Lucy! the poor old man has been delirious!—his illness entirely caused by having, the day I set out on this horrid scheme, been inform'd, that I was carried off by his vile pretended friend, for the worst of purposes, under a false pretence; and that those women from London were no other than vile impostors:—creatures at his devotion—sent for down on purpose to aid and assist the shocking scheme!—What news for my poor wretched parent!—it struck his heart with—I cannot write the sad—sad apprehensions of my

my boding soul,—O, if it should please heaven to take him from his Fanny!—ah, Lucy—I shudder at that thought.

I will now endeavour to give you a few particulars of this horrid affair:—but first let me see if my dearest parent still sleeps.—Yes, my Lucy, he remains in a sweet and profound slumber—may it be propitious! I write this on my knees (lest my posture of moving should disturb him) by the side of his pillow.—And now, my friend, I shall proceed with my story.

The post-coach and four of the vilest of men (I need not mention *who* that is) with himself, and those pretended ladies in it, call'd for your Fanny early in the morning.—My poor, good, deceived father, conducted me to the coach, and committed me to the care of his false friend.—He

wrung his hand, saying, "As she is in your hands I am easy."

I know not why, but on the coach driving from our little gate, a sensation of sadness, I had never before experienc'd, seiz'd my heart, and I felt a sudden tear springing to my eye.—The odious baronet was in amazing high spirits:—he caught my hand, and kissed it with a kind of transport, —I don't know how—and made many compliments on my appearance—that he never saw me so beautiful, and a deal of stuff of that kind.

The coach drove at a great rate, and by noon we arriv'd at Lord M—'s fine seat and gardens, in the next county.—Here we alighted; and after having seen the house, it was proposed by the vile women, that we should eat the cold collation, which was carried in the coach, in a little hermitage in the park;—during which, this shocking

shocking party behaved with so much freedom to each other, that I was quite surprized;—and their conversation, methought, seem'd wonderfully free, and indeed, upon the *libertine* order:—but as I had often heard, that ladies, in high life, were sometimes bold, and made use of a liberty of speech which might occasion censure, I thought it, at the time, no other than the fashionable modes of expression among such fine folks. At dinner (I have since recollected) and after it, the vile Branville endeavour'd, and almost obliged me to drink a glass of rich foreign wine he had brought.—I cannot express the importunity with which he tried to persuade me to accept it; but I most providentially refused it, as I never touch wine.—I say it was *providential* I persisted in my refusal, as I have now no doubt, but it was a potion wickedly prepar'd

for the poor intended *victim*. The vile Miss Gordon said, “ I was a squeamish little toad,” (an expression I had never before heard her use till that day) insisted I should drink it, and in a jocular way presented it to my lips;—but still (my better angel I doubt not preserving me) I was not to be persuaded.—O, my Lucy, I now doubt not, but that had this first plot succeeded, that very retir’d spot was intended by these wretches for the scene of my ruin.—I did not, however, refuse this wine from the least shadow of suspicion, as at that time I had the highest opinion of the wicked wretch and his accomplices, but merely because I am not fond of wine.—As to those women, they drank very freely of that and other liquors, and I thought seem’d quite different from their usual behaviour.

It

It was then proposed, as the afternoon was not far advanc'd, that we should see the ancient castle of Llandardy, a few miles, as they said, from thence. We accordingly got into the carriage; but it appeared to me, that we went a great many miles before we saw the least prospect of this castle.

Towards evening we drove through a small town, just at the entrance of which the pretended Lady Murray, on a sudden, said she was taken with a violent fit of the cholic, and (wicked impostor!) appeared to be in great agonies. — Miss Gordon cried, and begged her poor dear aunt might stop at an inn in the town;—for those dreadful attacks of the cholic, she said, were very dangerous;—and her dear aunt was subject to an inflammation in her bowels.

We stopp'd accordingly at a very large inn, and the pretended sick lady

was help'd out, but declar'd she must go to bed directly, as she always did, she said, in these attacks. Miss Gordon attended her to the bed-chamber, which I also offer'd to do, but the vile Branville took my hand.

“ My dear little god-daughter, you surely will not be so uncivil to leave me quite alone.”

This was just after we arriv'd.—I sat down very melancholy, as I began to see it would be impossible for us to go home again that evening.—I told the baronet I was extremely sorry for this accident, as I was very certain my poor father would expect me.—He desir'd me to make myself easy on that head, for that he should dispatch a servant to acquaint him of our stay.—He went out, as I thought, to give orders about this. On his return, I observ'd he lock'd the room door, and coming up to me, seized me in his arms.

arms.—I broke from him, terrified to death, as he attempted to kiss me with an odious degree of passion.—I screamed with affright, exclaiming, “What mean you, Sir?”

“I mean, (said the vile wretch) that I neither can nor will live without you.”—He then declar’d, with the most bitter oaths and execrations, that he intended that night to be master of my person;—that he should from thence carry me to London, and settle a handsome fortune on me, and provide for my father:—with a deal more of the same odious stuff, which I cannot, and shall not repeat, as I cannot dwell on the horrid particulars.—Imagine my astonishment—my indignation.—The whole vile plot now appear’d.—I burst into tears,—which was lucky, as it preserv’d me from fainting. The horror of my miserable fate presenting itself, I flung myself

myself at his feet,—where, sobbing, I exclaim'd, “ Have pity—have pity on me!—O let the remembrance of my poor aged parent, whom once you call'd your friend, and who could never survive this outrage,—let his sorrows change your horrid purpose—which, by all the powers of heaven I swear, never can or shall prevail.”

“ A fine tragedy speech this, truly!” cried the wretch,—“ and do you imagine that I am to be chang'd from a determination fix'd as fate, by your romantic nonsense?—a pack of ridiculous stuff out of antiquated books?—No.—Hear me, Fanny,—your compliance with my passion, shall for ever make your own fortune, and that of your father.—To-morrow we will set out for London, where I will provide you an elegant retreat.”

“ Vile man,” said I, in a transport of rage and grief, “ do you imagine
my

my father, the most exemplary of men, would receive from thee the wages of his daughter's shame?"

He again forcibly caught me in his arms. I broke once more from him, and screaming, ran to the door involuntarily, forgetting he had secured it.

"Your screams," said the wretch, "are unavailing, as we are luckily in a new wing of the house, detach'd from the other part."

I flung myself in a chair, and wept bitterly; whilst he traversed the room, exclaiming, that before to-morrow's sun, he would be master of his wishes.

"Well, I shall leave you," continued the wretch, "for a few moments, to seek for other measures to my aid; for by all the powers of hell you shall not escape me."—Saying which, he left the room, and double-lock'd the door after him.—I sat in an agony of
grief

grief and terror for some minutes, when the door was open'd, and who should appear but the vile Murray, whose *sham* illness seem'd perfectly over. It was evident she was sent in to try what *fawning* and *persuasion* would do.—She sat down by me, with great gravity and calmness, and really had the assurance (impudence I should say) to offer to take my hand in a kind manner.—I snatch'd it from her—and continued weeping.

“ My dear Miss Fanny,” said this wicked woman, “ why all these childish tears?—Let me reason with you on your amazing, unparalleled obstinacy.—Nothing can be more astonishing than your behaviour to the most generous—the best of men. You are greatly hurt, truly, to have so great, so advantageous an offer.—Consider, Miss Belton, what an opportunity you
now

now have of making your fortune for life."

"Vile woman," cried I, bursting from her, "do you imagine I shall sit tamely and hear your infamous harangue?"—She continued.

"I really, child, speak in *pure* friendship for you,—let me tell you, hundreds of young women would rejoice to be in your situation. Consider your interest, Miss Fanny: you have good understanding,—but have unfortunately got such romantic, ridiculous notions in your head, from your bombast authors, that you fancy yourself I suppose no less than a queen in one of your idle romances. Latin and Greek, Miss Belton, will not find you food and raiment.—Will your fine learning support you in affluence?—I fancy not, truly. Once more, my dear, consider seriously the happiness which awaits you.

you.—Nay I doubt not,—after the death of Lady Branville, but this worthy, this most generous of men, may marry you.”

I gave her a look of ineffable contempt.

“ Away,” said I, “ abominable woman !”

“ You are an obstinate chit,” replied the wretch ; when entered the villainous baronet, and his other *associate*. They retired all to a little distance from me, where I could only hear a few broken whispers from the vile Murray, such as—“ better be in London—powders—impossible here—screaming—uproar—”

“ My charming girl,” said the horrid man, approaching me, “ consider my passion,—consider the wise arguments of this good lady, and”—going to take my hand, I flew with incredible agility once more to the
door,

door,—but they at once surrounded me.—I was almost frantic—I looked round for some instrument of desperation,—but seeing none, I screamed with my utmost strength.

These wretched women, imagining I must alarm the family, (though as I have before said, we were in a large new kind of dining-room, detached from the house) after more whispering, flounced out of the room; when the vile Branville approaching me, “Prepare,” said he, to set off for London to-morrow morning by break of day.—You may sleep if you will with Miss Gordon this night, or sit up in this dining-room. Had you complied with a good grace, it would have been better for you.—Be ready by five in the morning.—Will you sleep with Miss Gordon?”

“No—no—no—” said I—“here in this room will I spend this wretched

wretched night---imploing heaven's aid."

" Ah ! very fine," said the impious man, and retired ; double locking the door after him.—I looked round, and falling on my knees, my eyes streaming with tears, implored the assistance of Heaven—that Heaven, which makes distressed innocence its chiefest care. My God, said I, this time, this one time, relieve me!—I continued upon my knees,—the house seemed hushed and still:—but, O Lucy, what was my terror, when I beheld a woman entering the room by opening a small door, which I had not seen till then, and which communicated with another passage!—I then gave myself over for *immediate* ruin ; concluding it was the vile Murray come at that time of night, to introduce the horrid man.—I was terrified, beyond all description ; when the
person

person advancing to me, I saw it was neither of those hateful women, but a maid servant of the house. I raised my head from the chair, which I had reclined on weeping, and looked up, my face covered with tears,—when seeing the servant distinctly, O my friend, how was I astonished to recollect the features and whole person of your old housemaid Sarah, who lived with you, if you remember, when I made my happy visits to you!—so providential a meeting seemed the particular care of heaven in my greatest need:—as such I shall ever acknowledge it. The maid, at the same moment, surveyed me with the utmost astonishment.

“Can it be?” she exclaimed.—

“No surely—it cannot be Miss Fanny. Good God!—yes!—no!”—

“O I am—I am,” said I rising,

“Fanny Belton—indeed—indeed I
am.

am.—Is it possible you can be Mrs. Sally, who lived with my dearest friend Miss Wilmot?"

Imagine our mutual joy and surprise. She enquired particularly after my beloved parent, which occasioned my shedding a fresh stream of tears. To be brief, I satisfied her amazement, in seeing me there, with a detail of the horrid particulars.

She informed me, in her turn, that she was the chamber-maid at that inn, which was a considerable one; that she had attended the other part of my company to their beds; and imagining no one was in the dining-room, came in, by meer chance, to see if the windows were shut; and that finding the great door locked, she came in by the little one in the passage.

I expressed my astonishment, that the family had not heard my screams:—She informed me, it was no great wonder,

wonder, as the room was in a manner built from the house:—that the servants were all busied in the kitchen, and her mistress at that time laid in, and was very ill, in the farther part of the house,—and her master was gone to a great fair at Llandovery.

“ O my good Sally,” said I, “ for heaven’s sake assist me in escaping from this dreadful wretch:—not a moment is to be lost.—Consider, this instant.”

She immediately—but the next letter shall inform you.

Ever yours,

F. B.

LETTER VI.

YOUR former faithful attendant, my Lucy, immediately contriv’d my escape in the following manner:—She stole down, and procured

cured me an old cloak, hat, and coloured apron,—she bade me fear nothing, for that with the greatest ease I could get out of the large sash window in that room, and slip down by her assistance into a small garden under it, the window being but a few yards from the ground,—that then I had nothing to do but to pursue the right hand road for about three miles, which would bring me at once to her own mother's house.

What joyful news was this for your Fanny? I perfectly remembered her good mother;—the very woman who nursed my Lucy in a bad fever.—I trembled so violently whilst I was equipping in my tattered garments, that I feared I should have fainted:—not that I doubted I should be incapable of the walk, but lest I should be discovered.

The

The good creature Sally fetched me a little mulled wine, and a bit of toast, with which she insisted on my *comforting* myself, as she called it.—She wrote a line to her mother too, desiring her brother might convey me home, when I thought proper, on a double horse.

Well, my dear, I sallied out with my faithful guide through the little door into the passage, which latter scheme we thought better, as I was so disguised, than descending from the window.

We were now on the great staircase,—Lucy do you not tremble for me?—where, who should we meet, but the footman of the vile Branville, going up to bed! I gave myself up then, you may be convinced, forgetting my impenetrable disguise: for the fellow, seeing my appearance to be that of an old woman, let me pass;

he however stopp'd Sally, swearing he would have a kiss of the pretty chamber-maid, which she granted to get rid of him,—saying to me,—“ Well, goody Mumford, you will be sure to come to-morrow morning to washing by four o'clock.”

The fellow went up to bed,—and most fortunately I got into the street, with the greatest ease and safety:—Sally wrung my hand, and whisper'd me to keep the great road to the entrance of the next village, where in a little tuft of alders at the bottom of the hill, I should find her mother's cottage.—Most luckily the moon was shining with her brightest lustre—and out I set.

Now does the little timid heart of my Lucy tremble for her Fanny.—But, in truth, my dear, I knew no terrors—I felt no sensation, but the most unbounded joy, in finding myself
self

self free from the vilest of men, and his horrid associates.—I ran, or rather flew over the common to which I had been directed by my kind deliverer, and committing myself to heaven, arrived (without meeting a single human being) at the little solitary cottage of your good old nurse Higgins, whom you, my Lucy, must well remember.—I knocked a considerable time, for it must be imagined, the peaceful inhabitants of this retired little dwelling were all buried in a profound sleep,—it being then about two in the morning.—At last the old woman opened a small casement, and I heard a voice calling out, “who knocks?” “a friend,” answer’d I, “who brings you good news of your daughter Sally.”—I had no need to say more, for down comes my good dame Higgins.

I instantly deliver'd the letter I had brought from her daughter, and on her perusing it, and my throwing off my disguise, the good creature ran to me.—“ Oh, Miss Fanny! how rejoic'd am I to see you!”—asking a hundred questions, about her dear young lady (meaning my Lucy) in a breath. I inform'd her of the *reasons* of her seeing me at that time of night, and in so strange a dress.—She blessed herself—exclaiming “ O the wicked base arts of these great gentlemen! But here you will be safe till my son James, who is a carpenter by trade, can carry you home; for he has a mare that carries double rarely well. But come, Miss Fanny, you shall have a dish of tea, and go into my warm bed.—You will be as safe here as a thief in a mill, as the saying is.”

Poor good soul, she made me smile. I accepted her kind offer of going to rest—

rest;—and in the sweet hope that I should see my dearest father the next day, for whom, you may be sure, I suffer'd much uneasiness, on account of my absence; though I then really believ'd the vile Branville had sent a messenger to him, as he said he should.

I went to bed, and slept—very soundly till nine in the morning; when—but before I proceed with my narrative, let me take a peep at my beloved parent,—by whose bed I am now writing.—Lucy, he still sleeps—is still in a sweet slumber—may it be propitious!—may it compose his hurried spirits!—I will now proceed.

I did not awake at the cottage, as I have before said, till nine, when the good woman came to tell me, what I was very sorry to hear, that her son James could not possibly go with me till the day following, on account of some very particular business:—“But

rest satisfied, my dear Miss Fanny," she continued, "for here you must be *safe*; here you shall remain in this little chamber.—Blessings on you—I love you as well as my dear Miss Lucy—and she is the same to me as my own."

I was sorry to find by this good woman's account, that I was near thirty miles from home;—so artfully had the wicked baronet drove across the country.—I was now, you see, my dear, under a necessity of remaining a day longer in this little secret abode, as I chose on every account the son of the old woman (whom I also remember'd) should be my conductor home, in preference to a stranger. But whilst I was thus happily situated, and pleasing myself with the extreme delight I should enjoy, on my return to my dearest parent, in the possession of the greatest of all
treasures

treasures, my *innocence*, little did I imagine he had accidentally discovered the whole horrid scheme of his false friend, which it seems he did in the following manner.

On the Monday evening, this dear, and best of parents was sitting in a little arbour, in the green plat, before our door, enjoying the calm quiet of a fine evening, after an excessive hot day.—He was smoaking his pipe, and expecting every moment when his Fanny would arrive, whilst our faithful Martha (from whom I had this account) was sitting at her spinning-wheel at the door, equally anxious for the return of her beloved child, as she still fondly calls me: when who should pass through the lane, but the butler of the vile Branville!

My poor father, rejoiced to see some one of that family, of whom he

could enquire if we were return'd—call'd to the man.

“ Well, Mr. Charles, are they got to the abbey?—But I suppose, as the day has been so warm, my worthy friend chuses to travel in this sweet evening.”

“ I know not,” said Charles very gravely, “ what he intends:—he discharg'd me this morning, before he set out.—I have been us'd, Sir, extremely ill:—but Sir Jasper Brantville had best take care how he provokes me.—I don't speak this through revenge:—I know enough—enough of his vile, horrid ways:—ways that may bring him, if he has his deserts—to the gallows.”

“ Fie—fie,—” said my poor good parent, “ take care friend how you condemn, or speak irreverently of one of the worthiest and best of human beings.”

beings.—I cannot bear calumny—
fie for shame!”

“ Ah, Sir,” said the man, “ it has often griev’d me to the heart, to see so good a man as yourself so much deceiv’d.—The life of the baronet, for many years, has been dreadful—too—too bad for humanity to hear.—But as to my dismissal, it is in consequence of my refusing to do some dirty work—dirty work do I call it?—Heavens! I shudder to think of it!—I saw what was going forward last night, when I had orders to fetch the wine that was to be carried with them—I began to suspect:—but this very morning, I, unperceiv’d, heard the whole shocking scheme.—I saw the horrid draught prepar’d:”—

“ What draught?” said my father, whose simplicity of heart you know is great—not having the least idea of what the man meant.

“ Ah, Sir,—a draught too well known to the vilest of mankind.—I ventur’d to remonstrate to him in the cause of such a sweet innocent. He denied every thing, flew into a violent rage, and instantly discharg’d me.—I have long discover’d that impostor Lady Murray, as she has the impudence to call herself, to be no other than the mistress of a brothel.—and the impudent young hussy, who calls herself Miss Gordon, an infamous girl on the town.—But to think of such a sweet, innocent young creature as poor Miss Fanny, to be ruin’d by such a vile plot, is too shocking to be repeated.—I overheard this morning the whole scheme—she is to be carried, I find, directly to London.—O what has that man, my late wicked master, to answer for!—Don’t, Sir, look upon me in the light of an incendiary, for I will take
this

this moment the sacrament, upon the veracity of what I say, concerning this horrid matter.—I will swear, and would, with my last dying breath, all this upon a Bible.—The instant my own ears convinc'd me of all this detestable scheme, and of the plot laid for the sweet innocent your daughter, I set out from the abbey to inform you of it;—and twice have I, Sir, been at your house this day for the same purpose. I knock'd—I call'd in vain, but at last was inform'd by some persons in this neighbourhood, that both you and your servant were gone to a funeral some miles distant.—I could not rest till I had inform'd you;—but, alas! I fear nothing can save poor Miss—”

What farther the man said, Martha knows not; for now alas! my astonish'd parent, with a heavy groan, fell from his chair to the ground, ex-

claiming in the most piteous accent,
“ Oh my child!—my child!”

The man assisted Martha in carrying him into the house, and laying him on his bed—where he remain'd in so strong a fainting fit, that they call'd in several neighbours.—You know, my Lucy, how the dear man is belov'd by all his poor parishioners;—some went as far as B—— to desire the assistance of good Mr. Hutton the surgeon there, and who has likewise good skill in physic:—he arriv'd, and instantly bled him,—on which he open'd his eyes, and fixing them on the bye-standers, demanded his child.—“ Is she gone?—quite gone?—ah, my poor lost” —then fell into a kind of convulsive agony.—The neighbours sat in tears by him all night; but oh my friend,—how shall I write it?—before morning he was in a strong fever—a high delirium.

rium.—He sprang up in his bed,—and seizing on the first person near him, in the most furious transport of rage and grief, exclaim'd, “ Villain—false, perfidious—restore me my Fanny.—This old arm shall revenge.”—Then pushing them by,—and staring with unutterable wildness,—“ Hah ! there I see, the vile detested wretch !—Hark—Hark—I hear her shrieks !—Fanny, I come—I come my sweet.—I once had a friend—I once had a child—but now—no matter—no matter.—I am a poor, old man.”

O Lucy—I cannot—cannot proceed with his affecting complainings. I must throw down my pen for a few minutes, to indulge a flood of tears.

The day following, I am inform'd, he remained in the same deplorable state ; sometimes dozing—sometimes raving—→

raving—sometimes weeping for his child.—In the mean time, I remain'd safely secreted till the Wednesday evening; for not till that time, could the good woman's son manage his business to set out with me. She thought, and so did I, that, as the nights were moon-light, it would be most safe for me to travel by night, than by day.—On the Wednesday evening then, about ten at night, (properly disguis'd in my dress) I was mounted behind the good young man, who was perfectly acquainted with the way. No accident happen'd on the road: and oh heavens! how fondly did I indulge the transport of flying into the arms of my dearest father. I thought every mile was ten, till I arriv'd home, little, alas! imagining the miserable scene I was so soon to behold!

I got

I got to our little abode about ten o'clock yesterday morning, having travell'd all the night. I alighted in the highest spirits, and ran into the house with great joy; but good God! what was my astonishment, when the first person I saw was Mr. Hutton, who inform'd me, in as gentle terms as he could, (you know his humanity is great as well as his skill) of the very melancholy account of this most alarming illness! The worthy man supported me (for such was my tremor and violent shock, I was hardly able to stand) to the chamber of my dearest parent; but oh, Lucy, what an object presented itself! I found him in his bed, supported by pillows, poor old Martha kneeling by him, as were likewise a few of our nearest neighbours. The instant my dear father descried Mr. Hutton, he fix'd his eager eyes on him, with
a wild-

a wildness in his look which pierc'd my very soul. — I stood behind, lest my abrupt entrance should alarm him. The surgeon advancing, “ Well !” (said my poor father) “ have you found my darling ? — I will go to her, if I crawl on my knees.”

“ Here good Sir,” said Mr. Hutton, taking my hand, “ here is your daughter : — she is return'd in safety.” — But oh Lucy, he knew me not ! — Do I live to write it ? — He stared on me with a frantic air, and pushing me from him, exclaim'd, “ *That* my child ! — my Fanny ! — no — no — that is the infamous woman from London, the imposter — sent for the horrid purpose to decoy my sweet innocent.” — He then mutter'd something softly, — “ Why we were old school-fellows — and at the same college. — Ah ! perfidious villain !”

Oh,

Oh, Lucy, what were my agonies to hear these affecting reveries!

But this moment I see Mr. Hutton enter the room.—I tell him my father has enjoy'd a sweet sleep of above three hours.—He surveys him with a deep, and sorrowful attention.—I *thought* he sigh'd, and shook his head;—but it might be only my *fancy*.—This salutary sleep must certainly compose his mind! A ray of hope seems to spring in my soul, and tells me, it will be productive of favourable symptoms.—He wakes—and seemingly compos'd.—In the ardent hope he is better, I throw down my pen, and flatter myself my next will inform you,

I am again your happy

FANNY.

L E T-

L E T T E R VII.

Mr. HUTTON, to Miss WILMOT.

Madam,

WITH the utmost concern, I take up my pen to inform you, by the desire of your most distressed and amiable friend, Miss Belton, that her excellent parent, and the best of men, expir'd yesterday soon after my arrival.—Yes, Madam, I trust he is gone to that Heaven, where alone such sufferings and virtue can be rewarded.—Your poor, afflicted friend, desires me to mention what happen'd from the conclusion of her last letter.—Miss Fanny, alas! flatter'd herself (as youth is sanguine, and full of *hopes*,) that the long slumber, which my dear old friend had, for some hours, seem'd to enjoy, would
be

be attended with the most salutary effects;—but the moment I survey'd his countenance, I observ'd a visible change for the worse.—He awak'd however perfectly compos'd:—and looking on me earnestly, with a feeble voice, ask'd me to raise him gently on his pillow:—I did so:—Miss Fanny, was kneeling by the bed-side. “How does my dearest Father?”—she ask'd. He survey'd her with a look of ineffable tenderness.

“My child!—return'd indeed!—But art thou *innocent*?—unfollied?”

“I am, Sir, as innocence itself.” He lifted up his eyes, which I observ'd had a dim, glazey appearance.

“Heaven, I thank thee.”—He continued for some moments in a sort of mental prayer, and soon afterwards, which was beyond all description affecting, as if he had entirely forgot the late dreadful incident, with a voice
but

but just articulate, he said, “ Fanny, —my dearest,—come nearer—let me lay my weary head on thy innocent bosom.—There—it is as it should be.” —He endeavour’d to strain her to his heart—he made an effort, but was too weak.—“ Bless me—heaven” —was all I heard.—He fix’d his eyes on his beloved child—they fix’d—they clos’d—and without a sigh, or groan, he expir’d.—Oh, Miss Wilmot!—I must throw down my pen for a few minutes—my tears will flow for the poor, good old man*!

Miss Fanny, who believ’d he was dropt again into a sweet slumber, held up her hand, that I should make no noise to disturb him.—Alas! I saw he was gone for ever!

* Here let the libertine (if such should ever peruse this artless, melancholy tale,) reflect how many parents *he* may have *reduc’d* to the same affecting exit; let him look into his own heart, and drop a tear for those he has brought to similar circumstances.

I pass.

I pass over, dear Madam, the dreadful, melancholy scenes that follow'd, on the poor young lady discovering the fatal truth:—suffice it to say, it was with the utmost difficulty she could be torn from the body of her dead parent.

I have sent for my wife, who will stay with poor Miss Belton till the funeral is over; and then we will convey her to our house, where she shall remain till we can hear from her aunt, or settle her in some safe abode.

Wednesday.

Poor Mr. Belton was interred this day, in one of his churches.—Never was seen so affecting a sight as the tears, I may truly say, of the poor peasants. Indeed the whole body of parishioners attended the little melancholy ceremony,—and I believe there was not a dry eye among them all.—Mr. Belton was, as you well know,
per-

perfectly ador'd by his poor neighbours; to whom he was the common parent, adviser, and friend.—They were even clamorous who should carry him to church; and each would have a look at that best of men, on whom they dropp'd a tear, before the coffin-lid was fasten'd down for ever.—The whole was affecting to a great degree: twenty children, boys and girls, whom this excellent man had taught to read, walk'd before the corpse, singing an hymn, he had formerly taught them, with a nosegay in each of their hands, which they flung afterwards into the grave, upon the coffin, as did many others, after the manner of this country. The chief inhabitants of the parish (who all attended as mourners) intend, poor as they are, to raise a small subscription for a little grave-stone

stone to his memory, and as a lasting memorial of their affection.

Oh Madam! that vile—vile baronet, what has he not to answer for!—Fanny has told me all.—It is that wretch, who has sent our poor old friend to his grave!—The neighbours have all got a kind of confus'd notion of this bad action, and are all so exasperated against the base man, that they one and all declare, they will tear him out of his carriage, if he attempts coming again to the abbey.—You know what the *Welsh* are, when they are provoked.—But I believe the horrid man is gone directly from the inn where he was, up to London, as he naturally concluded, on Miss Fanny's escaping him, she would discover his villainy, and publish his character.

I have seen the butler who made the discovery to our poor old friend.

He

He is an intelligent fellow, and has taken a solemn oath before a magistrate (at my request) of the particulars of the scheme relative to your amiable friend.

To-morrow my wife and I intend carrying poor Miss Fanny home with us. Indeed we would never part with her; but I am soon to set off for Dublin, where our eldest daughter Peggy (whom you was pleas'd to favour with your kind notice) is going to be married, very advantageously; and I intend to settle in my profession there, as I have a prospect it will turn out much to my benefit. We propose setting out in a few weeks. I repeat, I would very gladly take the amiable Miss Belton with us; but I apprehend in that case her aunt might be displeas'd, as it might be construed into a doubt of her protection. I know not the lady,—but

as she was sister to Mr. Belton's wife, there is no doubt but she will at once take her poor niece home to her;—especially, as she has daughters of the same age, it will be very agreeable, I should imagine, on all sides:—they are people, I find, of genteel fortune.

Miss Fanny has been writing a few lines to her aunt, in which she begs her protection in so moving a manner, neither my wife nor I could read them without tears.

She bears this most grievous trial of the loss of the most tender parent that ever existed, with as much *Christian* fortitude as the excess of her grief will admit; though the shock has been so great, that it has brought on a low fever; but I hope on our conveying her from these melancholy scenes, and by the use of proper medicines, and my wife's good nursing, we shall soon restore her to her for-

mer health. Her excellent understanding will, I hope, and her resignation to the Almighty, enable her to submit to this most trying calamity. She has had her pen in her hand more than once to write to you, but I would not permit her to make use of it; to her aunt a *few* lines could not have had the effect on her present deeply wounded mind, as the opening *all* her griefs to the friend (as she calls you, Madam) of her bosom. Her heart is too much soften'd for an employment of that kind at present; and I know you would not desire it till her health is better.—She is at this time under my care, you know, and I prohibit all writing at present.

* * * * *

Mr. Hutton in Continuation.

We conveyed your amiable young friend home to our house this morning.

ing. I have locked up the little cottage, so lately the sweet abode of elegant simplicity, content, and virtue. I propose to sell all the goods; and the library I shall dispose of at once to a learned gentleman near us.

A small sum will arise, I imagine, from the sale, to defray a few necessary debts. A few of the best Greek and Latin authors, Miss Fanny reserves for herself, which she calls her little fortune. Several compositions of her own there are besides in manuscript. I pray to heaven her turn for literature may be of *use* to her—but I *fear* the contrary.

My wife, who you know is a plain good woman, often says, she wishes Fanny had been bred to her *needle* rather than to her pen, as by the former, she might have been enabled to have acquired a genteel livelihood. But you may be sure, *madam*, she

does not give the least hint of this to Miss Fanny. We do all we can to comfort, support, and advise her.— This most worthy friend of your heart, sends her affectionate love; and hopes to be able to write herself soon. My wife and family join in most respectful compliments to yourself and father.

I am, Madam,
your most obedient,
humble servant,
JOHN HUTTON.

P. S. We have brought poor old Martha with us. This ancient woman, you must remember, not only nursed Miss Fanny, but her mother also. The poor faithful woman is so affected with the late melancholy event, that I have no hopes of her recovery: she has hardly spoke, or taken any nourishment since she heard
Miss

Miss Fanny was carried off, and since she lost her master.

L E T T E R VIII.

Miss BELTON to Miss WILMOT.

Nov. 15.

AT length, my Lucy, I am able once more to take up my pen.

Alas! my dear, I have been ill,—extremely ill, since Mr. Hutton wrote; and but for the humanity and skill of that most worthy man, and the tenderness of his excellent wife, I should have been now in my grave.

Their behaviour to me has been perfectly parental. Oh, my friend! how little do we know what we *can*, or *cannot* sustain! when I lost that tenderest, dearest parent, (now a faint in Heaven) that best of human be-

ings,—to support the shock I thought *impossible*:—and yet I still exist—still must drag on this wretched state: doomed, I fear I am, to taste in this life the bitter cup of misery:—an unfortunate orphan,—poor,—distrest,—and friendless. Do not wonder to see my letter all blotted and effaced.—Lucy, it is my tears:—they flow—and will for ever flow, at the sad, sad remembrance of my irreparable loss.—But, wretch that I am! let me not bestow a thought on my *own* distresses;—but let the contemplation of the present (I humbly trust) happiness of my angel-father, absorb every selfish consideration. He—in the society of blessed spirits,—of “*just men made perfect*,” still beholds his orphan child,—still will be her guardian angel and protector!

Mr. Hutton has given you an account, I find, of every thing:—I
will

will not therefore repeat the sad—heart-breaking particulars; but must inform you, that the poor faithful woman who attended my dear unfortunate parents in all their misfortunes, and nursed me in my infancy, was the week after our arrival here, found dead in her bed. She lay as in a sweet sleep—and had evidently pined, and hardly took any sustenance, from the day she believed her poor child, as she fondly used to call me, was carried off by the horrid wretch, who has sent my poor,—poor father to his grave! Oh! do I live to write it?—Perdition will surely be his lot, and his conscience will be sharper to him than “a two-edged sword.”

The poor honest servant Martha left a small bit of paper in her pocket, in which she desir'd to be buried at the feet of her revered master. There

was a little scrap of paper annex'd to it, which she calls her *will*; in which she leaves me two gold rings—her bible—and a pair of silver buckles, which my dear mother had given her.—Do you think, Lucy, I shall not prize this little treasure?—ay, more than so many diamonds.—In a little piece of rag, carefully wrapp'd up, we found ten guineas; part of which her little *will* specifies was to purchase her coffin; the remainder was to go towards a *grave-stone* for her honour'd master.—What a valuable faithful heart did this poor honest creature possess!—This little treasure of ten guineas she must have sav'd from her youthful days;—as she never, from my poor father, would receive a farthing of wages.—She attended us, as she often said, “out of *pure* affection.”—She was fourscore, and upwards;—and yet retain'd

tain'd all her faculties, and was very capable of attending us, till this fatal, fatal blow fell on us.—Her lamentations would, on that sad occasion, have pierc'd a heart of stone.—Peace to her ashes!—I kiss'd her cold cheek—and bedew'd it with my tears.—I give you this particular account of your poor old favourite, as in those happy days, in which my Lucy grac'd our little cottage, with her presence, you always expressed great pleasure in her attendance.

I have written to my aunt (as Mr. Hutton has inform'd you) to implore her protection.—You know, my friend, I could do no other;—for as to remaining with these worthy people much longer, it is impossible; though, such is their humanity, that they would freely take me to Ireland;—but I certainly think, in my very *destitute* state, I had better at once

throw myself under the protection of my aunt: besides, in duty I *ought*, as she is the only surviving relation of my dear mother.—I have not yet receiv'd an answer to my letter—but the distance is above fifty miles: it is on the borders of England in H——shire. I imagine she waits to send by some private hand, as it is so much across the country.

The sale of our poor old household furniture came to but a very trifle. The books too are all disposed of, excepting a few of the best Greek and Latin authors (my whole portion) which I shall keep by me;—for I hope my knowledge in those languages will turn to my *advantage* *. I have likewise a number of little poems, odes, and pastorals by me, which, when I come to be more

* A sentiment arising from the amiable *simpli-*
city of our poor heroine.

composed

composed in mind, I think of publishing, with several translations from the Greek, of my performance.—But what I chiefly build my hopes upon, is the tragedy I mention'd to you last year, of which my father gave me the plan—and of which two acts and a half are already written.—I suppose I shall find time at my aunt's to finish it, and to pursue my studies.

O, my Lucy, that I were near you, —to pour my griefs into thy faithful bosom, that seat of tender confidence, —to unfold all my cares—my fears, and anxious solitudes!—Alas! how melancholy is it to reflect, that the dearest friend I have *now* on earth is on the other side the globe!—I write on, without considering you will not know a word of my calamities these six months, at least, to come:—a tedious twelvemonth will it be before I can receive thy answers!—In “ my
F 6 mind's

mind's eye," however, my Lucy is sitting by my side,—and joins her tears with those of her wretched Fanny!—But yet I will not, notwithstanding my distressed situation, look on myself as completely *wretched*, whilst I have an upright heart to comfort me;—whilst I am strengthened by virtuous resolutions;—and whilst I have that God to support me, whose chiefest care is suffering innocence.

Ah! my Lucy, how was I affected in leaving the little, rural; peaceful cottage, where I spent the blameless days of infancy!—and where every spot brought my sweet friend to my memory!—I took my leave for ever of the little arbour of eglantine, which you had twisted with your own hands;—of the old oak, under whose shade we have so often sat and sung;—of the stile in the little filbert-copse,

copse, where we so often used to meet.—Hard,—hard, did I find the task of quitting for ever those beloved scenes!—unfortunately, too, the carriage which conveyed me, with good Mr. and Mrs. Hutton, to their hospitable mansion, passed through the very village, and by the very house, in which you liv'd. — The little avenue that leads to it, (through which I have so often ran with rapture to meet you) is now o'ergrown and gloomy: the doves of which you were so fond, I heard cooing at a melancholy distance.—Ah, my friend! when I thought of my present situation of distress, and compared it with those former tranquil days of happy, *careless* ease, my very heart died within me.

I begin to wonder I have had no letter from my aunt.—But it is impossible I should know what she may have

have had to hinder her at this—I am interrupted.—Peggy Hutton calls me down to walk in the garden.—Dear girl!—I come.—These kind friends, my Lucy, will not let me be a minute alone, if possible, lest I should indulge my griefs.—I must then, for the present, throw aside my pen.

Adieu—adieu.

Your faithful

FANNY B.

L E T T E R IX.

Dec. 1.

THE long expected letter from my aunt arrived yesterday:—I shall make no comments on it, but transcribe it for your perusal.

Mrs.

Mrs. GRIMSTON to FRANCES
BELTON.

Dear Niece, *Grimston House.*

I received your melancholy letter; and think your situation most deplorable. Left in the *destitute* and *very wretched* condition in which you at present are, I know not indeed what to advise.—To be sure I am sorry for the death of the man whom my *imprudent* sister thought fit to marry;—but more sorry, I must add, for the strange romantic manner in which he has bred you. Greek and Latin, I find, and an immoderate love of *scribbling* poetry, and a pack of romantic nonsense, Mrs. Parker, who was lately your neighbour, tells me employ the whole of your time. Had you but applied yourself to your needle, (as other *indigent* girls do)
instead

instead of indulging this ridiculous itch for letters, Mr. Grimston and I would gladly have contributed some small matter towards binding you an apprentice to a mantua-maker, milliner, or some other reputable trade. Your mistaken father, addicted to learning himself, and having no son, gave his daughter a *son's* education, without considering he had not a single fix-pence to leave her.—But I will not reflect on the *dead*.

Your case is indeed deplorable:—I know not what to advise.—But you must come to us I think:—though I really am not very fond of introducing a *wit* into my family. I thank God my two daughters have very good understandings, but they have no ideas of setting up for *learned ladies*. And if you come to us, I must lay my strict commands on you,
never

never to instill any of your high-flown notions of literature, into the heads of my girls:—I wish them only to excel in the *pleasing* accomplishments; as dancing, French, singing, &c.—but desire them to acquire no farther knowledge: I would not have my daughters *set* up for *wits* for the universe.—You must (as your *distress* is so great) come to us I think.—But really how to get you here, I know not.—You cannot expect I should send our own carriage:—a double horse will be the best conveyance;—and as some of our neighbours are coming your way, they shall call for you: you may be sure I shall send a safe person.—As I suppose you are bare of cloaths, and as I imagine, in your distressed state, you have not been so absurd as to put yourself to the expence of buying *mourning*, I have had the consideration to send, by the bearer,

bearer, a small bundle of cloaths, with which I desire you will equip yourself, that you may not *disgrace* us. I have sent an old black gown, which you may have easily altered to a plain style, for I suppose you would hardly wear it in its present *tasty* fashion. I have also sent an old cap or two, of my Caroline's, which you may alter into a plain form, so as to make a decent appearance.—Mr. Grimston is well inclined to receive you; but as to that, it is *immaterial*, as you have *my permission*; and if you behave well under my roof, I shall not refuse you my protection, being

Your affectionate aunt,

ARABELLA GRIMSTON.

P. S. I have just heard that farmer Hill, a worthy man of this place, is coming to a fair near you, I have therefore desired him to call for you, with a double horse, on Wednesday next,

next, by which time the snow I hope will be gone off the roads.

Miss Belton in Continuation.

What a letter is this of my aunt's!— I wept for two hours on reading it.— But hold—let me consider, and be thankful that I have this protection (such as it is) to fly to, when hundreds of poor young creatures, left in the same destitute circumstances, have not, perhaps, where to lay their wretched heads!

I have been examining my aunt's *considerate* present, which consists of an old tatter'd black silk negligee, and a dirty gauze cap.—I had indeed been guilty of the *absurdity* she *condemns*, in having, from my small stock of finances, put myself into decent mourning, for the *best* of men, and tenderest of parents.

You

You see, my dear, what sort of woman my aunt is.—But hush'd be my fears in regard to my future situation:—the same good providence, ever kind and just, will still I trust protect me.—O my Lucy! how shall I be able to part from these kind, worthy friends, Mr. and Mrs. Hutton! their behaviour to me is quite parental.

* * * * *

Wednesday is arrived, and I am every moment in expectation of the man and double horse, which is to carry me to Grimston House.

Good Mrs. Hutton strains me to her affectionate bosom:—She is shock'd to think I should set out on horseback, in one of the deepest snows we have had for many years.—She is afraid for my health, and
blesses

bles her self, she has not the hard *hearts* of some folks.—She—

But this moment the good man is arriv'd. I must *tear* myself from these dear friends.—Adieu—adieu then for the present.

* * * * *

Village of Llanville.

Here I am, my friend, I thank Heaven, safe at a small inn on the road; as it was impossible for me, and my good guide (for so he appears to be) to reach our journey's end this night.—The poor old mare, on which I was mounted, fell lame on the road, and we had near been buried in the snow over the dreary moors and mountains we have pass'd.—Never did I experience so dreadful a journey.—I have been almost perished with cold, notwithstanding Mrs. Hutten wrapped me in three cloaks, and packed up in a small basket,

basket, a large vial of a strong cordial of her own making, for me to support myself, together with a cold neat's tongue, cakes, &c.—Methinks I still feel her parting *tear* on my cheek.

Most luckily, my guide is not only a very careful good kind of man, but also quite conversible, and well behaved. I was much oblig'd to the kind efforts of this agreeable companion, on our dreary road to this little inn:—he did all he could to entertain me, by relating many little droll anecdotes of the families by whose houses we past, which greatly beguil'd the dismal time we were on the road.—On hearing my name was Belton, he exclaim'd,—“What! are you poor Mr. Henry Belton's daughter?—Blessings on ye:—if you inherit half his goodness, you will be an angel upon earth.”

I could

I could not help weeping, my Lucy, at the earnest kindness with which this honest man mentioned my poor parent.—On his observing my grief, he endeavour'd to comfort me.

“Come, dry up your tears.—Well-a-day! I guess you are going to sojourn with Madam Grimston—and all things will turn out well, I doubt not.—To be sure the 'squire is as good a man as ever broke bread;—and Madam would be better lik'd, if she did not carry her head quite so high. I wish she and the misses would come and take a fillabub at my house:—but they are *above* that.”

I ask'd if he had a wife.

“No, Madam, I have not.—I once”—here he fetch'd a deep sigh—and remain'd so melancholy during the rest of our miserable journey, to this little inn, that I was convinc'd
he

he had some deep affliction at his heart.—I don't mean in his circumstances, for I had gather'd from his general talk, that he liv'd in a very handsome farm of his own.

On our arriving at this house, this good man took me off the horse in his arms, (for I was so benumb'd with cold, I could not stand) and carried me into a little parlour, where he order'd a large fire, and tea immediately.

“Don't be afraid,” said he, “to trust yourself with an old batchelor, my good young lady, I will do all I can to entertain you.”

He order'd a fine fowl to be prepar'd for our suppers; and whilst we were at our tea, I had an opportunity of observing my companion more minutely;—in whose countenance, honesty and benevolence were strongly impress'd, but with an air of the deepest

deepest melancholy spread over his features I ever beheld. He appear'd to be about forty years of age, his dress plain, but neat:—his conversation I found much above that of the common rank of farmers; and I could easily distinguish his education had qualified him for a higher sphere. There was something so friendly in this man's behaviour, that destitute and helpless as my condition was, and the idea of going the next day to a proud, and unkind relation;—all this together so assail'd my weak heart, that I could not help bursting into tears.—Mr. Hill took my hand.

“Come, take courage—there's a merciful God over all—dry up your tears, and let us try to be merry.”

“You are very good Sir, (endeavouring to force a smile) you are yourself so chearful, that”—He interrupted me. “Chearful! Ah Miss!—I could

tell you a tale that would make *your* sorrows appear trifling.—It is true, I endeavour to put on a face of ease, and mirth:—but I have *that* here—(putting his hand to his breast) I have had my trials.—As we have an hour or two to spare before supper, I'll give you the heads of my melancholy story:—the calamities of others often teach us to bear our own with patience.”

“If it be not impertinent,” said I, “I should be glad to hear it.”

“Impertinent!” he cried, “no—I will gladly inform you, of what is indeed the constant subject of my thoughts.”

He then began his little history, as nearly as I can remember, in the following words.

“I am the son of a wealthy yeoman, who, and several generations before him, inhabited the comfortable
ble

ble little patrimony I now enjoy. My father, who was very fond of me, (being his only child) chose to give me not only an education above the rank in which he lived, but also gave me the choice (for he said he would have his son a *gentleman*) of being bred either to the law, the church, or in a merchant's compting-house. —I chose the latter: and accordingly, at the age of eighteen, was sent up to London, and placed with a worthy merchant of the first eminence; where I liv'd seven years, with universal estimation. About this time, my master, who was an old widower, married a young lady of some beauty, and no fortune. From that period I may date the beginning of my misfortunes. My master had not been married three months, when he missed several sums of money. His suspicions, by his wife's insinuations, un-

happily fell on me; and though he himself confess'd it was strange, that after having serv'd him so many years with the strictest integrity, I should prove dishonest at last, yet I was seized and committed to prison.

“Among my acquaintance, *suspicion* was enough;—it was not mention'd that I was apprehended through a mistaken opinion, but that I was actually imprison'd for robbing my master.—My very fidelity was made use of as an aggravation of my guilt; and the integrity I had so lately been esteemed for, was now termed the specious machinations of plausible cunning, and artful hypocrisy.

“The circumstance being so publick, it could not long remain conceal'd from my good old father:—who, poor man, was but just recovering from a violent fever, when this cutting news was sent him.

The surprize and affliction caus'd such a violent agitation in his mind, as occasioned a relapse. None but a parent can conceive the anguish which a parent feels on such an afflicting occasion.

“ But why should I dwell on this dreadful circumstance?—Suffice it to say, his relapse was attended with consequences the most fatal; for in a week's time, I receiv'd a letter acquainting me of his death, and that he had expir'd in the utmost agonies, calling out (as he suppos'd me) upon the disgrace of his name, and the scandal of his family.—But, oh, Miss Belton, my afflictions did not stop here. It is now twenty years since, and yet my heart is torn at this hour; not more by the wound of filial affection, than the pangs of disappointed love.—Yes, my poor, my amiable Nancy, thy lovely image is

this moment before my eyes, and tells me, how blest I might have been by shewing me"—

Here the good man's tears flowed so fast, he was some moments unable to proceed.—And do you think, Lucy, I did not weep too?—Indeed I did.—After some minutes he continu'd.

“ Well, God's will be done.—I will, if possible, be compos'd. You must know, I had for some time paid my addressee to a young lady, who, if a lover is capable of judging with impartiality, had every virtue which could excite the warmest admiration, and whose person was form'd with every grace that could inspire the tenderest love. For some years before, my character, and the favorable opinion she had long entertain'd for me, (notwithstanding the disparity of our circumstances, for she had a very considerable fortune) had induced her friends

friends to consent to our marriage; and the week before my being unjustly committed, our wedding-day was fix'd, cloaths bought, and every thing getting ready for the completion of our wishes; but, alas! instead of seeing me as a happy husband, she was to look upon me with horror, and to think me an imprison'd felon. The moment I was taken up, she was hurried into the country, and shortly after forcibly married to a drunken fox-hunting 'squire, and, in less than twelve months, died of a broken heart.—But to come to the point.

“ My trial came on, and no evidence appearing of the least consequence against me, I was of course acquitted most honourably: nay, in a very little time after, it came out, that my master's wife had taken those very sums of money for which I had been falsely imprison'd, in order to sup-

port the extravagance of an officer in the army, who had been long her gallant. But what was I to do? I had no remedy for the disgrace I had suffer'd; nor any reparation for the injury that had been done to my character: and though my innocence was publickly known, yet nobody would employ me;—because I had been taken up, on a suspicion of having robb'd my master, my acquaintance seem'd to avoid me:—in short, I was not used with half that tendernefs when *acquitted*, as I should have met with had I been *condemn'd*.—Such is the nature of man! my case was miserable:—I was robb'd of my character, of my father, and of the woman of my soul.—In short, I went abroad (being almost distracted) to try, by a variety of scenes, to amuse my mind.—About fifteen years since I returned, and settled in a farm I had purchas'd,

chas'd, (having a decent sufficiency for life) in the parish where Mr. Grimston lives.—I made choice of that spot above all others in the world, because *there* my dear, and ever-lamented Nancy lies interr'd: and there, on that account, I intend passing the remainder of my days. I enjoy a pleasing kind of grief in visiting my dear girl's grave, and few days pass, but I bedew it with my tears."

Here Mr. Hill ceas'd his story, which affected me much.

We finish'd our little supper, and I am now in my small bed-chamber, scribbling this day's adventure to the friend of my soul.—I had brought in my pocket an Epictetus, and a Horace, to amuse my mind;—but my companion prov'd so agreeable, I had no occasion for any other entertainment.

G 5

Good

Good night, my Lucy!—we are to set out as soon as it is light in the morning, for Grimston House.—Pity and pray for

Your poor

FANNY.

LETTER X.

Grimston House.

I Arriv'd yesterday, my dear, at my aunt's, who sent for me up into a little room, which she has dignified with the name of *dress'ing room*. She receiv'd me with a very stately air, whilst your poor Fanny, who you know is naturally timid, stood trembling before her, as if she had really committed a *crime*, in putting herself under her protection.—She survey'd me very attentively, and I thought chang'd colour.

“ So

“ So Frances, (in a solemn tone) you are come at last!—why you are much *taller* than I imagin’d.—And—child, what have you over-heated yourself with riding, that you look so like the Red Lion at Brentford?—Have you always that hue of a dairy-maid in your cheeks?—Perhaps you are hot with riding*.—Have you taken any refreshment below, since you arriv’d?—We have din’d in the parlour above an hour ago.”

I inform’d her I really could eat nothing, as I was almost frozen with riding in the snow.

“ Bless me!” she replied, “ I really should not have expected such delicacy from a girl bred on a Welsh

* Mrs. Grimston had in fact no fears that her niece was over-fatigu’d with her journey. Her chief passion was pride; and the vanity of being still *admir’d* as a very fine woman.—She was therefore not a little hurt, at the amazing beauty of the lovely Fanny.

mountain.—Well, child,—Monson, my own maid, will shew you the apartment I have allotted for you.—I will send for you down to tea.—I am now you see busy (she was trying on a new cap before the glass)—Remember Frances, you are not to *poison* the minds of my girls with your ridiculous Latin and Greek.”

I humbly told her, I should make it the study of my life to oblige her and my cousins:—hoped they were well, and likewise my uncle.

“Your cousins,” said she, “as you call them, are at present engag’d with their French master, who comes weekly from B——; therefore don’t break in upon them, I beseech you.—There—you may now go.”

I curtsied, and left the room, but calling me back again,—“I hope, child,” she said, “you have not brought with you that old woman, who

who tack'd herself to your family for so many years?"

I was shock'd, my Lucy, as the poor Martha was the person she meant, and who had been her *own* nurse as well as my dear mother's.

"No, Madam," I replied with some degree of spirit, "no, Madam, the worthy woman you mention is I trust happy.—Heaven has taken her to itself for some time."

She again star'd at me, and told me I might go to my apartment. I curtsied—and withdrew.

I have been thus particular in my account of this lady, as the *minutia*, you know, my dear, always best exemplifies a person's character. My aunt, I fancy, has been very handsome; and though she is near fifty, there are still the remains of a fine face:—and I think she seems to know it, as she survey'd herself often in the
glass,

glass, whilst she was talking.—She was mightily drest out, and powdered.

Well, Lucy, I am in possession of my *apartment*, as my aunt calls it.—It is enough to make one sick of the name of an *apartment*;—for I really believe it is nothing but a little kind of rubbish hole, into which they have squeez'd an old tatter'd tent bed, for my use.—It is at the very top of the house; the furniture no other than one broken chair, and a table with three legs.—I am thankful, however, I have a small *refuge* to myself,

* * * * *

I was sent for down to tea:—my cousins *ey'd* me very attentively:—they appear older than I am:—both *affected*, to the greatest degree:—their persons remarkably plain, and they appear puny, and sickly.—At supper
they

they wanted to begin a conversation on *poetry*, which I declin'd.

“ I suppose,” said my pert cousin *Emily*, “ you will make a *poem* on your leaving Wales, that romantic spot.—I imagine you have always a muse at your elbow.—Well—I am so glad you are come!—Now we shall never want for rebusses, and acrosticks and riddles,—now we have got a *wit* among us.”

Her mother thought this observation very smart, and gave her daughter a look of great pleasure.—*Caroline* sat in silent scorn.

I was surpris'd I had not all this time seen my uncle;—but I soon found he was look'd on only as a cypher in the family, and was then, poor man, laid up with his *annual* fit of the gout, in the farther corner of the house.—My aunt, I find, has always the entire management of
every

every thing, and prides herself in what she calls having a *great soul*, and in being the most *notable* woman in the country.

* * * * *

My aunt having given this small mansion, which is, in fact, no more than a decent-looking fash'd box, the pompous title of *Grimston House*, sufficiently shews me her character. The situation of this spot is very dreary, by the side of a bleak swampy moor.—Not a tree to be seen, except a few straggling yews in a corner of the garden, which is call'd the *wilderness*, in which is a kind of little hovel, known by the name of the *Gothic Temple*.

* * * * *

Monday, Dec. 10.

Lucy,—I have now been here above a week, and have not actually made

made one good meal in all the time. I am almost starv'd—though we have every day a dinner, of what my *managing* aunt calls a genteel *figure*: we have as Swift says,

“ Five *nothings*, in five plates of *delft*.”

and for supper, three roasted apples, and three burnt potatoes, are usher'd in with the parade of a sideboard, and a footman. Sour raisin wine has the appellation of *Frontiniac*, and skim milk cheese, my aunt calls *Parmesan*.

My cousins have neither an ear, or voice; but because music is a fashionable accomplishment, they have an old singing-master comes to them weekly, from a town at some miles distance.

This gentleman ask'd me one day to sing a song; I complied in my *artless* manner, (for you know I am quite unacquainted with notes) and
he

he was pleas'd to bestow many encomiums on my poor performance.—My aunt look displeas'd—and desired to hear no more of my *squalling*, lest it should *spoil* the *taste* of her daughters. Indeed, my dear, your poor dejected Fanny has but little heart to sing—the hourly insults she bears, are quite intolerable.

* * * * *

Wednesday.

O Lucy, this is not to be borne!—I had this morning shut myself up in my little garret, and had just finish'd an ode to *melancholy*,—and a translation from my favorite author Homer,—when in rush'd both my ill-natur'd cousins.—They snatch'd up my performances, and ran down stairs with them to my aunt;—with “We caught her, mamma, in the very fact of scribbling her nonsense.”

“ Carry

“ Carry the trumpery stuff,” said my aunt, “ to the cook, and bid her *singe* the fowls for dinner with it, or skewer it on to the next roast beef we have:—it is quite intolerable of the girl:—I am determin’d I will have no such ridiculous doings in *my* family.”

My enraged aunt carried her displeasure to me so high, that she omitted to have me call’d down to dinner; and afterwards ironically told me, she suppos’d I was too much engag’d with the *musés*, to think of *eat-ing*. In short, not a day pass’d but I am insulted with being call’d “ the Philosopher in Petticoats,” or by some other term of derision: so that I am ready to cry out with Juliet in Shakespear,

“ Is there no pitying power

“ Which sees into the depth of my distress?”

Monson,

* * * * *

Monson, as my aunt calls her maid, is however kind to me.—Upon my word, my dear, I should be absolutely starv'd, if it was not for this good woman. My aunt, with all her *parsimony*, still keeps up the form of grandeur; and, in imitation of quality, chuses to sit late after dinner, though it be only over a few mouldy walnuts, or rotten apples.—If these relations of mine were in straiten'd circumstances, I should pity them; but it is, I find, far otherwise.—My uncle has a good estate, and may be justly call'd a rich man;—but this *niggardliness* is all my aunt's *management*.—Adieu my dear from

ever your's,

F. B.

Here

Here is an interval of three months, in which, though Miss Belton continues to correspond with her friend, yet as the letters, though not *un-entertaining*, are not immediately necessary to the thread of the narrative, the editor has omitted them.

L E T T E R X I.

Grimston House, April 3.

O My Lucy, that I were this moment tending sheep,—milking cows,—or in the *lowest* state of slavery, instead of being this *miserable thing* I am! My aunt seems to keep me here, for no other purpose in this world, but as a subject for her pride to work on.—Yesterday a great deal of company were here, when an incident happen'd, which has made me out of all patience.

My

My cousins had the cruel insolence to call me down into the parlour,—to desire me, “to solve a *problem* in *Euclid*.” This, you may be sure, was contriv’d to have some mirth at my expence. On my saying their request was impossible, as I had no pretensions to any thing of that kind, they broke out in a violent laugh, with “Ah! poor Fanny, what does your wonderful knowledge fail you at last? Mrs. Lewis desires you would make an elegy on the death of her lap-dog, and Mr. Brown wishes you to exercise your muse in making an epithalamium on his ensuing marriage.—If you *must* be *poetical*, we will find you work enough.—These ladies wanted to see a *live* authorefs.”

This cruel sarcasm my spiteful cousins thought mighty clever:—a tear started to my eye.—The company, I must say, appear’d by no means inclin’d

clin'd to favour their wit;—but seem'd to look on me with an eye of compassion.

My poor uncle, who is now quite recover'd of his annual gout, and who (when my aunt does not observe him) often gives me a kind look of approbation, then did so; and softly desir'd me not to be *daunted*.

This couple (notwithstanding his perfect acquiescence) lead but an unhappy life:—and how should it be otherwise, when one considers the *motives* of their coming together?—My aunt married Mr. Grimston merely for his fortune; and he had no other inducement than her handsome face.—What reasons for two people spending all their days together!—or rather, what reasons for *prophaning* the sacred marriage vow!

Indeed, my poor uncle leads almost as wretched a life as myself.—“ You
shall,

shall, Mr. Grimston, do this—and I *will* have you do that,”—are his hourly lectures.

Ah! my friend, that I was now on that *immense* watery space which separates us!—I endeavour to support my spirits with the sweet *hope* that we may yet live to meet again.

I now am shut up in my little *apartment*, scribbling to my Lucy, which is the only comfort left me.

Bless me! what have we here! A post-chaise and four horses driving up the gravel walk, before the house, three footmen riding by, and my uncle attending by the side of the chaise!—what can be the meaning of all this?—my aunt I hear calling, “Betty, Susan, Peter, where are ye all? Run,—fly,—open the best parlour windows—lay down the carpet.—Caroline, Emily,—run this moment and put on your last new caps, and

and pink ruffs."—Heavens! what can be the meaning of all this?—But here I shall sit *snug* in my garret, and see all the parade.—Merciful Goodness!—what do I see!—my aunt runs herself to the outer gate!—A young gentleman taken out of the chaise—supported in the arms of his servants!—Is he dead?—no:—one arm hangs lifeless, as if broken—my uncle himself supports his head, which seems wounded, and which is reclin'd on his shoulder. In the name of Goodness, who, or what can this stranger be?—He appears young, (for from my little window I can see the whole melancholy procession) and extremely handsome—his fine hair dishevell'd!

This moment Monson is come for a vial of hartshorn, which happen'd to be in my room.—She informs me this fine gentleman, my dear, is no

less than Sir Charles Belford, who unfortunately has been overturn'd about two miles from this house.—His arm it seems is broke, and they fear one of his legs, by the wheel of the carriage running over him.—His head is also greatly wounded by falling on a rocky stone.—Poor gentleman!—Is it not, my Lucy, a sad accident!

My uncle, it seems, who was taking his afternoon's ride, pass'd by at the very moment this happen'd, and assisted the servants in lifting him into his carriage, and very kindly (on hearing his name and title, and that he was just returning from the next county where he had been chosen member of parliament) very humanely, I say, desir'd he might be carried to his house, no other fit for his reception on these dreary moors being nearer than several miles distance;
for

for at the next village nothing is to be seen but wretched cottages. As the poor gentleman's wound in his head bled very much, his servants were greatly alarm'd, and begg'd their master would accept of the kind gentleman's invitation;—who would likewise recommend them to the best surgeon these parts afforded.

Monson was in such a hurry, she could tell me no more; only that she never saw so fine a young gentleman in her days.—But I am call'd down.—Even your poor neglected Fanny is to help to get things in order, in this general bustle.—At night I will tell you more.—Again I am call'd.

* * * * *

Eleven at Night.

Lucy, never was so amiable a man!
—But let me try to collect my scatter'd thoughts as well as I am able;

H 2

for,

for, some-how, my spirits are sadly hurried. To see any one in pain always hurts me, for I am a miserable coward.—But I must endeavour to give you some account of this poor gentleman.

My aunt call'd me down for something she wanted in the best parlour, where on a couch was plac'd this amiable stranger. He appear'd in great pain,—pale,—his head still bleeding.

“Frances, (said my aunt, who with my cousins were tearing linen for the bandages, against the arrival of the surgeon) fetch another pillow—make haste—how you stir!”

I flew for the pillow.—I found the maids up stairs preparing the best bed-chamber.—Monson whisper'd me—“I never saw my mistress so pleas'd in my life.—This fine young baronet's a batchelor, I find:—Now
if

if he should take a liking to Miss Caroline, or Miss Emily !”

“ Aye,” said I, smiling, “ who knows but that may happen ?” Indeed I observ’d I never had seen my aunt appear so happy, which I had wonder’d at, with such a melancholy accident just happening :—I carried down the pillow, and advanc’d with great humility to the couch on which the poor gentleman was laid, making my very best curtsy.—Ah Lucy, never did my eyes behold so fine a figure !

As I was going to place the pillow under his head, he open’d his eyes, and fixing them on me very attentively, with a languid voice he said, —“ You are very good :—I am sorry to give all this trouble :—a thousand thanks.”

O Lucy, how he look’d !—I trembled.

H

My

My aunt hearing him speak to me, hastily turn'd round—with, “How awkwardly you have put the pillow indeed!—Come away, and let me adjust it.”

I retir'd, abash'd, to the other end of the room.—Sir Charles Belford look'd at me, I thought, with great compassion.

“Go, Frances,” said my aunt, “and get coffee immediately.”

This she said, I suppose, to make me appear in the light of a servant, or to get me out of the room.—Peter the footman, was gone with the gentleman's servants to fetch the surgeon, many miles distant.—Monson and I, however, got the coffee, &c. and she carried it in; I followed with a plate of cakes. During this repast I stood by the window, my aunt, I imagine, not thinking so poor a girl as I should sit in the presence of

of a baronet.—He drank a dish of coffee, and seem'd a little reviv'd, though in great pain.

“ I am fearful, Madam,” said he to my aunt, “ I shall give trouble.”

The maids over head were making such a noise in dry-rubbing the chamber, and in clattering about, that you would have thought, indeed, great preparations were making.

“ This unfortunate accident,” he continued, “ happening so far from my own home, the trouble that—”

My aunt interrupted him with a most smiling air.

“ I beg, Sir Charles Belford, you
“ will not mention the word *trou-*
“ *ble.*—Know, Sir, I think myself
“ happy in having you under my
“ roof.—I should have been extreme-
“ ly sorry, indeed, not to have had
“ this honour.—I think, Sir Charles,

“ I remember your mother. — We
 “ went, I believe, to the same school
 “ in London: She was, I think, a
 “ *Cecil*, or a *Churchill*; I forget
 “ which. My father” (my aunt,
 you must know, values herself on her
 family, which certainly was a good
 one) “ I very well remember, was
 “ a leading man in that great county
 “ election in which Sir Anthony
 “ Belford was chosen.—You see we
 “ are, in fact, not absolute strangers.”

My aunt was full of her welcomes
 and fine speeches;—but the poor
 gentleman growing quite faint, begged
 to be carried to his apartment.—
 The surgeon too now arrived,—and
 I really believe every one attended
 the mournful procession up stairs.—
 Just as I got to the chamber-door
 with a bundle of fine linen for the
 bandages, my aunt turned out with
 great quickness upon me,—snatching
 what

what I had in my hand, with, “ You
“ are not coming into Sir Charles
“ Belford’s room, I hope ! — You
“ would not be so *indecent* surely !”

“ I was not, madam :—but as to
“ the *indecency*, as I followed the ex-
“ ample of you and my cousins, I
“ thought I could not do wrong.”

“ Don’t be pert child,” she cried,
flapping the door in my face.—In-
deed, my dear, I would not—could
not have stayed in the room for the
world, to have seen any person in such
misery, as I am convinced *poor* Sir
Charles must feel from the surgeon’s
operations.—His arm was broke—his
knee dislocated, and his head much
cut, though it seems not dangerously.
I went down, and could not help
weeping to hear his groans.—You
know I have a heart that can feel for
the distress of others.—How my two
cousins could bear to stay in the room

H 5 during

during the operations I cannot conceive:—my aunt's presence might perhaps be necessary, but I cannot think that of the *girls* so.

Never, my dear, did I see my aunt in such good humour, as when the family met to sit down to supper.

The surgeon has ordered his patient to keep his bed for some days, and to be kept quiet, as he apprehends a fever will ensue.

But as I was saying, my aunt is so delighted with her guest, that she could hardly contain herself till the servant was dismissed after supper; then she began.

“ Indeed, *my dear*, (to my poor uncle, who looked equally surprized, and delighted, to be addressed by such an unusual epithet—) you never in your whole life did so *judicious*, and *proper* a thing, as to bring this fine young gentleman to our house:—who
knows,

knows, but that it may produce *something more lasting* than a common acquaintance?—I assure you, Caroline, whilst you was holding the drops to him, I thought this young baronet surveyed you very attentively, notwithstanding his pain:—and indeed so he did you Emily.—Well! I had the strangest dream last night!—methought I saw one of you, but which I cannot recollect, dressed all in white as for a bride; and a sweet, pretty young gentleman standing by.”

My poor simple uncle, who adores his girls, laughed with pleasure till he shook his sides.

“*Fanny*,” continued my aunt, the first time she has ever called me *so*, “you shall make some verses on the occasion if such a thing *should* happen.—Well—nothing is impossible.—Belford!—Belford!—what a pretty title is lady Belford!”

H 6

“Aye,”

“Aye,” said my uncle, “and what is better than a title, he has a *great* ESTATE. A great deal of ready money, by the death of an uncle, is fallen to him lately besides.—I have heard a good deal about him, as he is chosen member for ——”

“O charming!” said my aunt, “to be married to a member of parliament.—Caroline, if *this* should succeed,—you will go up to London whenever the *house* meets.” “But,” said I faintly—I thought I might venture to put in a word, in this scene of general joy; “who knows but the gentleman may be a *married* man?”

“No—no,” said my uncle, “not he; he’s a bachelor I’ll answer for him.—Well, my jewel,” said my delighted uncle to my aunt, “now you have put it in my head, I *do* think Sir Charles

Charles seemed to *eye* Caroline with some degree of attention."

We now all rose to go to bed. My uncle gave my aunt a kiss on the stairs, and the girls even began a little romping—so elated were they.

"Hush—hush—" said my aunt, "you will disturb the *baronet*."

I retired to my little loft at the top of the house, and not being disposed to sleep, scribbled thus far to my Lucy.—Heigh ho! I find myself unusually melancholy to-night. I have been weeping—and thinking of my poor father. Good night to my sweet friend!

I am, &c.

F. B.

I forget if I told you in my last letter, that I have finished another act of my tragedy.

L E T-

L E T T E R XII.

April 8.

FOUR days, my friend, have pass'd since I dated my last letter, in which nothing very material has occur'd.—The poor gentleman is still confin'd to his bed, though the surgeon thinks him in a good way of recovery.—My aunt continues in a most exceeding *happy* disposition:—my uncle looks very *simpering* and goes humming about the house,—“ Oh! the happy bridal day!”—My two cousins are dress'd every day in *smart* caps, and some of their best ornaments; for my aunt, these two days, has had her afternoon tea carried into the baronet's apartment,—by way of *amusing* him, she says, as he is now able to sit up in his bed, and to converse:—but I think she has *another* reason,

reason, besides *amusing* her guest; namely, introducing her daughters to his notice.—Do you think your poor Fanny is one of these little parties!—Oh—no—no—my aunt says, she could not think of *intruding me*, upon so *fine* a gentleman.—But here comes Monson—I throw down my pen.

Lucy, I am amaz'd:—she came to tell me that Sir Charles Belford desires I would drink tea in his apartment this afternoon, with the rest of the family.—“Impossible—my dear Mrs. Monson,” said I.

“Indeed 'tis true,” said the good woman, “and I'll tell you, Miss Fanny, how it happen'd. Sir Charles was drinking a dish of chocolate I had carried him this day about noon, and whilst I stood waiting by him, my mistress came into the room.—After the usual compliments, she said, my daughters and I, Sir, will do ourselves

selves the honour of drinking our tea with you this afternoon.—Pray, said Sir Charles, (O Miss Fanny, what a sweet gentleman he is!) pray, Mrs. Grimston, have you not *another* daughter?—I thought the day I came here I saw another young lady:—if not your daughter, I imagine she is one of your family.—I beg you will make no sort of ceremony with me, good madam.—Whoever that young person is, pray be so free to bring her, for I am an utter enemy to all formality.—Is she a relation of your's? —My mistress colour'd up as red as scarlet.—She is—she is—Sir Charles, a girl I keep out of charity.—Poor young woman! said he; but as she is, I imagine, the companion to your daughters, let them come all together pray.—I really thought she was your relation, for I indeed think she *resembles* you, Mrs. Grimstone.—My
 poor

poor mistress (who God help her is very vain) look'd pleas'd to be thought like so handsome a young person— (Monson's words, remember Lucy.)

“Do you think the girl like *me*, Sir Charles?—No great wonder indeed, as she is, I own to you, a relation of mine.—Her mother was indeed my sister, but very foolishly married a poor Welsh curate—who is at last *dead*, and the girl being left quite *destitute*, I have taken the young creature under my protection.”—“You acted with great humanity, Madam, said the amiable gentleman.”--“And now Miss Fanny,” continued Mrs. Monson, “you are to get yourself ready to go with your aunt and cousins, at five o'clock, into Sir Charles's apartment.—It would have been very particular indeed, if your aunt had omitted you longer.—But to say the truth, I do really think it was the compliment Sir Charles

Charles paid to her *beauty*, that you owe her kindness in taking you with her.—Poor lady, she has a great deal of vanity.”

“Well,” said I, “Mrs. Monson, I’ll be ready.”

“O I forgot,” said the good woman, “my mistress particularly desir’d you would not dress yourself.—Let her come in her common things, said my mistress, if she *must* go.”

It is now almost five o’clock.—To be sure I am a very strange figure to wait on such a gentleman.—My eyes too red with weeping,—for I am very low, my Lucy, and have been thinking of my poor father all the morning.—But adieu, for the present.—Heaven’s how I tremble! what ails my foolish heart?

Now,

* * * * *

Ten at night.

Now, my dear, for an account of my visit.—On the stairs I met my aunt and cousins, all elegantly dressed.—Caroline look'd quite angry at me. “Come, are you ready, *madam*?” was her strange word.

We all went into Sir Charles's apartment: he was sitting up in his bed, his arm in a kind of box.—But oh, my dear, never did I behold so fine a countenance!—Sensibility and benevolence seem strongly impress'd on features remarkably handsome.

The curtains were all opened round the bed:—by the side of which the tea equipage was plac'd.—I made a low curtsy on my entrance, and was just going to say, “I hope you are better Sir,” but somehow, at that moment, I had not the gift of utterance,

utterance, I was so abash'd.—My aunt bade me sit down in a chair, rather out of the little circle.—Whenever I look'd at Sir Charles, for so very amiable a man could not help attracting *some* notice, I found his eyes fix'd on your poor Fanny, which made her blush extremely.

“ Shall I fill out the coffee ? ” said I to Caroline, who was making tea.

“ No ”—she replied in an angry whisper, “ you are so *mighty* officious ! ”

During tea, it was really disgusting to see the odious forwardness of these girls to Sir Charles.—He was every moment offer'd the sugar, the cakes, or the toast, &c. I sat quite out of the circle, and for my part, there was no room for my offering my like services of attendance.—Sir Charles, I thought, seem'd quite tir'd of their fulsome civilities.

“ We

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“ We will take care,” said my aunt, “ of our patient :—my *daughters* will do all in their power to *nurse* you.—They play a *little* on the guitar ;—shall they endeavour to entertain you with their performance on that instrument ?—or shall they read to you ?”

“ O la,”—said Emily, with a spiteful sneer to me, merely as she thought to *expose*, and to raise a laugh from Sir Charles, at my expence !—“ O you don’t know, Sir, that we have a *poetess* in the house.—I am sure, if you have a mind to see some very *fine*, curious verses,—pastorals, and *odes*, I think she calls them, your taste will be amply gratified *.”

Here

* It is a true observation, that *envy* evermore defeats its own purposes. This malicious girl, Emily, whose sole intention was to ridicule her cousin’s *literary* abilities, unfortunately, for herself, touched on the very principal acquisition and talents which this most worthy young baronet thought particularly estimable. He was
himself

Here my aunt join'd *cruelly* in this raillery, and laughing, said, (for she thought I should now be very sufficiently expos'd and ridicul'd,) "Come Frances, let us see some of your scribbling.—I told my *cook* indeed to make use of the *last* of your performances that way, but I fancy you have still a secret *board*.—It is a wet afternoon, and prithee fetch down what you have by you.—It is a pity that *genius* of your's, and all the philosophy you pride yourself so much upon, should be lost."

"This she spoke in the most *taunting* manner.—Sir Charles had penetration enough to observe it; and

himself a remarkable fine scholar; his genius and learning were of the first class:—his taste for *poetry* was exquisite; of which he had given the world many proofs, by having been the author of several very elegant poems, and other pieces of polite literature.—Miss Grimston, therefore, could not have taken a more sufficient method to *recommend* her poor cousin, though *her* motive was purely malice.

with great respect desir'd me to favour him with a sight of my performances.—My aunt and cousins were quite pleas'd, to think how finely I should be turn'd to *ridicule*.

I arose blushing,—and to Sir Charles I said, “I am fearful the little productions of my pen will afford you, Sir, no amusement:—but, if it is your desire,—”

“Go,” interrupted my aunt, “Sir Charles Belford does not expect, I dare say, any thing very *extraordinary* from *such* a girl.”

Just as I was shutting the door, I heard my cousins—“We shall have the finest diversion in the world,—I am glad we thought of it.”

“It is lamentable, Sir Charles,” said my aunt, “the *itch* this girl has for scribbling:—it will be the ruin of her.”

I heard

I heard no more, but ran up stairs, and brought down those pieces which you, my Lucy, fondly flatter'd with your approbation, in former happier days. I also selected an ode I have lately written on Solitude;—some blank verses on a spider's web, &c. &c. which you have never seen*.

“There Sir,” said I, presenting them to Sir Charles, in no small confusion; “be favourable in your censures to so young and unskilful a *muse*.”

Sir Charles receiv'd the little deposit with such an air of respect and compassion, I thought, as touch'd me to the very soul.—I *fancied* he press'd my hand, but am not *certain*:—my spirits, to say the truth, were much

* These, with a variety of other moral and entertaining pieces, both in prose and verse, have been lately published in two volumes, under the title of “Literary Amusements, or Evening Entertainer.”

agitated.

agitated.—He look'd surpris'd; —and after reading for a few moments, he was pleas'd to make me *such* compliments, that I shall not, my dear, repeat. My aunt, and cousins, wink'd at each other, and laugh'd most heartily as they imagin'd, and *perhaps with truth*, that the baronet was turning me into ridicule. Be that as it will—he enter'd into a long conversation with me on epic poetry;—and on the most celebrated Greek and Latin authors;—for my cousins had maliciously told him I understood both languages.

I find he is an extreme fine scholar; and I must say, he appear'd quite astonish'd at my education. I told him it had been the sole amusement of an excellent father, a man of remarkable learning and genius; saying which I could not help shedding tears. The baronet, I thought, seem'd af-

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fects with the tribute I paid to the memory of my poor, lost parent.

Though neither my aunt, or cousins, were able to join in our conversation, as we were engag'd in a discourse on the beauties of the tragedies of Euripides, Sophocles, and others;—yet as they thought I was sufficiently *exposing*, and making myself *ridiculous*, they sat tittering and winking at each other.

At length, my aunt rising to put an end to the visit, Sir Charles begg'd I would leave my manuscripts with him.—I curtsied and we retir'd.

My cousins rallied me, after supper, most unmercifully, for my *pertness*, in talking so *much* to Sir Charles.—“We would not,” they said, “have made ourselves so ridiculous for the world.”

“I had a mind to see,” said my *kind* aunt, “how far your *vanity* would

would lead you, Frances.—You! to pretend to talk of Homer, and Virgil, and Greek and Latin, before such a gentleman!"

I don't know, my Lucy,—I cannot say I observ'd any traces of *ridicule* in the countenance of Sir Charles.—O my dear, never—never, was so fine a figure! But what is *figure*, compar'd to his accomplish'd mind!—his taste on every subject so refin'd!—his sentiments, so noble and exalted!—Ah! Lucy—Lucy—I almost wish—I had never—Wretch!—not another word on the subject—let me throw aside my pen, and humbly creep to my miserable bed, beseeching Heaven to shield my heart from what I fear will be too formidable for the repose of your poor unhappy

FANNY.

✍ An interval now pass'd of three weeks, in which Miss Belton continued writing to her friend; but as the letters are only a repetition of the unkind usage of the family she was with, and of an account of visits to Sir Charles Belford, similar to that mention'd in the last letter here publish'd, the editor does not insert them, but proceeds, at once, to the following one.

L E T T E R XIII.

May 2.

POOOR Sir Charles, my Lucy—
 “ Ah, Fanny,” you cry,
 “ what do you begin the very first
 “ line in your letter with the name of
 “ this too amiable, accomplish'd
 “ man !”

Your reproof is just.—But yet I
must finish my paragraph.—Poor Sir
 Charles

Charles then, I repeat, is again confined to his bed.—A sort of tumour (I don't understand the terms of surgery) attended with great pain, is come upon his knee, which was dislocated.—The surgeon is oblig'd to lay it open.—The anguish of this inflammation has been so great, as to deprive him for several nights of sleep; and, in short, I understand has brought on a low fever:—so when he will now be able to leave this mansion, I *fear* will not be very soon.—Yes, Lucy, I say again, I fear: for oh! my friend, he is—alas! but too—too amiable, too formidable for my peace.—It pleas'd Heaven to protect, to *save* me, from the vile machinations of that most horrid wretch the shocking Branville;—but, alas! I fear, strange as the *paradox* may seem, your poor Fanny is doom'd to be *undone* (if the expression may in this sense be allow'd)

by a man of the most exalted sentiments, and refined virtues.—Alas! my dear is it, that my heart, soften'd by its sorrows, and destitute of all comfort, naturally seeks it where the strongest traces of pity and respect appear? and where continually the whole behaviour of Sir Charles Belford seems to tell me, his heart is fraught with benevolence and the most tender compassion? Or is it—O my Lucy, do not chide me, but I fear—I greatly fear this too formidable, and excellent man will be the source to me of a greater misfortune (though innocently so) than any I have yet experienc'd.—I told you in my last letter*, that not a day passes, but we spend it in his apartment. I say *we*, for my aunt can frame no sort of excuse for leaving me out of the parties,

* This letter appears not.

ties, especially as Sir Charles desires I may not be omitted in the little circle.—The commendations he has been pleas'd to bestow on the productions of my pen, are indeed enough to make your poor Fanny very *vain*.——Here methinks I hear you exclaim, “Heavens, Fanny! what is it I read? Can it be possible that a passion for this accomplish'd man—” Here I must interrupt you, Lucy.—Do not call it a *passion*, I beseech you, but an *humble admiration* of his merits.—But whatever it is, I am going to punish myself very severely for my presumption, in daring ever to lift my thoughts,—yet Heaven knows, without one gleam of *hope*.—Yes, my dear, I will inflict a punishment on this too susceptible heart of mine; and the virtue of my resolution, in this particular, will, I think, convince you, that I would not for the world con-

tinue longer exposed to the daily danger of seeing—of conversing with *such* a man.—I will not dare to suppose that he has, that he *can* have any sentiments for me but those of *pity*: and that he *does* pity your poor Fanny, I am convinc'd:—his frequent sighs, —his expressive eyes, —his melancholy, —and other little nameless attentions (though not design'd by him as *such*) make me tremble, lest I should be *entangled* in an hopeless passion.

As nothing is more blind than *vanity*, so my aunt still continues to flatter herself, that the *charms* of her daughters, and their assiduities to please and amuse Sir Charles, may perhaps have the desir'd effect.—She imagines, my dear, that the extraordinary compliments, and everlasting discourses on literature, which this amiable man addresses to your poor Fanny, are only mere words of course, and not the result

sult of pity. And yet for some days, she, as well as my spiteful cousins, have behav'd, if possible, with more unkindness than ever,—which makes me fear they have observ'd the *particular* attention with which Sir Charles is pleas'd to honour me; and which I have not so much as a grain of vanity to suppose proceeds from any other motive than that compassion, which his benevolent heart feels for every object in distress. He must see too that this family behave with all that cruel insolence which is too often practis'd to the fatherless and helpless orphan, by such who think they have an undoubted right to *teize* and *tyrannize* over those who are supported at their table.—It is impossible but that a person of such penetration and understanding as is this accomplish'd man, must *see* my aunt's character, however guarded she may be. You

I 5 know,

know, my dear, there are certain minute touches on the countenance sometimes, which are so transient, that they can hardly be overtaken by the inquisitive eye; and which, from the passions being strongly guarded, are so slight, that a common observer cannot discover them at all.

But what is this punishment (my Lucy asks) which I am going to inflict on myself?—It is, my friend, that I am now come to a final determination to leave a place, in which the longer I stay, I shall only see more and more, of the extraordinary merits of this amiable man:—and, indeed, the unkind treatment of my aunt, and cousins, renders my life quite a burthen: I therefore am determin'd, at all events, to acquaint my aunt, that by her permission (which I fancy she will be very ready to grant) that I intend to get into some station, where I
can

can earn my bread.—By remaining here, what do I, my dear, but treasure up a perpetual source of melancholy? for ah! Lucy, I *fancied* I wept for my father for these few past weeks—but, alas! I fear my tears sprang from another cause.—Yes, I will go—and yet, like poor Helen, in Shakespear,

- “ ’Tis pretty, though a plague,
“ To see his eyes, his arched brows,
“ And set them down in our *heart’s table*,
“ Heart, too *sensible* of his sweet favour.”

This confession is to the friend of my soul, the sister of my heart; therefore I will make no apology.—Surely, my dear, I may admire at an awful distance this godlike man! for so he is.—Can it be wondered, bred in the retirement I have been, that my poor susceptible heart, should not have been taken by surprise?—Sorrow, my

Lucy, wonderfully softens the *heart*, and disposes it to receive tender impressions: and destitute as mine was, and desolate, it seem'd to implore pity of this generous man.

Heigh ho!—I wish he would let me have my pastorals again—but I am this moment call'd away.

* * * * *

My aunt call'd me down to write a note for her,—she being in haste, and told me if I *must* scribble, I might as well make use of my pen in some matter of *use*, and write a letter for her to a lady some miles distant.—But oh, my dear, what a discovery have I made! I am trembling from head to foot.—“The matter?” you ask.—Why, my dear, my aunt sent me to write her letter into a little dressing room, not far from poor Sir Charles's apartment, who I told you,
in

in the beginning of this letter, is confin'd to his bed. In this room there are always pens, ink, and paper, with a desk to write on; and there is a door from the stair-case which leads directly to it, without going through the apartment of Sir Charles.—Here then I wrote what my aunt had order'd me, and on my recollecting there us'd to be wafers kept in the drawer of a little ebony cabinet which stands always there, I open'd it; when I saw several written papers, as odes, sonnets, &c. (I should have told you, that before Sir Charles had this relapse, he often came into this little room to write.) So fond as you know I am of *poetry*, it was impossible for me to *resist* my *curiosity*, in not giving these pieces a perusal, which I was convinc'd were written by Sir Charles, (I had before, on some occasion seen his hand-writing) I
was

was enchanted with these fine compositions; and happy would it have been for your poor friend, if she had look'd no farther; but, alas! a letter in the same drawer, attracted all my attention.—“Naughty, —naughty Fanny,” (you cry) “and did you dare to look at the contents?”—Indeed I did, my dear,—and I defy almost any person in my situation to withstand this temptation:—for in casting my eye carelessly first over it, I saw these words, “She is *niece* to Mrs. Grimston.” Then, my Lucy, I repeat, it was not in nature to resist my curiosity.

I found it was a letter from Sir Charles, addressed to some particular friend. After giving an account of the accident which had confin'd him at Grimston House, he comes to the paragraph which *so much* engag'd my attention. He there says, “But oh
my

my Wentworth, how shall I describe the angelic niece of these good people?"

And then follows, Lucy, such a character, or rather description of the mind and person of your poor Fanny, that my blushes will not give me leave to write. He adds, (think of my astonishment !) " By all the powers of Heaven, I swear, I would make this dear, lovely girl, mine for ever, by the most sacred bond of marriage, directly; (so much has her refin'd understanding, and sweetness of manners captivated my soul) were it not, that I am bound by ties of the strictest honour and gratitude to ——"

Here, most unfortunately for my curiosity, no more was written—only one side was begun:—indeed I had seen enough.—O Lucy, Lucy, can it be possible?—I really thought I should have fainted.—I would have given worlds to know what those *ties* of
of

of gratitude are he mentions.—Of *gratitude*?—When I found I was belov'd by Sir Charles Belford, I thought, my dear, my poor heart would have burst from my bosom, such were its flutters.—There is an old saying that we should *pay* for peeping;—and dearly do I already pay for it, as methinks I am more wretched now than I was before.—Ah, Lucy, I did indeed fear I was not wholly indifferent to Sir Charles!—What can these *ties* be, which are such an unfurmountable bar to him?—But no matter;—it is impossible, my Lucy, to imagine I should ever be united to him.—No—no—calamity,—dependance, and poverty, are, I fear, the portion of thy distressed Fanny!

Yesterday

* * * * *

May 4.

Yesterday we drank tea in the baronet's apartment :—he was just barely able to fit up in his chair :—but such an air of melancholy in his fine countenance !—As to myself (conscious as I was of having pried among his papers) no criminal ever appear'd with a more guilty air before his judge.—Sir Charles, I thought, seem'd to observe me with more than usual attention :—indeed it was so obvious, that I am convinc'd my aunt caught his eyes continually turn'd towards me :—but here comes Caroline.

“ If you can deign, *Madam*, (were her words) to talk of any thing but books and *authors*, my mamma desires you to come this moment to her in her own chamber.”

What

What can be the meaning of this message? but you shall know before I sleep.

* * * * *

I might have spar'd myself the trouble, my dear, of *intending* to tell my aunt I should be glad to go into some family, by way of getting a livelihood; for in fact, the good lady, of her own accord, is going to send me packing.—She is in great wrath, as you shall hear.

I went down, according to her message;—she was sitting before her glass.

“Frances,” said she, “shut the door; I must have a great deal of serious talk with you: I have observ’d some things in your behaviour, lately, which really *shocks* me.”

“Shock you, Madam? I hope not.”

“How

“How dare you repeat my words? I say again I am *terrified*, to observe a certain *forwardness* in your manner, before men; nay, I will speak *out*:—I have no patience to see the *boldness* with which you behave to this poor gentleman we happen to have at present in the house.—Good God! Child, what dangers would you be expos’d to, with those strange romantic notions of your’s, were you to behave so to the generality of young men of fortune and fashion!”

O Lucy, how cruel was this! I burst into tears.—“Boldness, Madam! did I ever speak to Sir Charles upon any one subject, but merely to answer a question in common conversation?”

“I will not be interrupted, Miss;—you give yourself great airs of late, because forsooth this gentleman, for no earthly reason, but merely for his
own

own diversion, has talk'd to you now and then about poetry, and such stuff. —He laughs at you, Fanny, I assure you, very heartily. —But to the point. I will, child, take proper care of you. I *shudder* to think what may be the unhappy consequences of all those ridiculous notions, with which you have fill'd your head out of books: —I will *preserve* you; for though doubtless Sir Charles Belford is an exemplary man—his character is well known to be so—yet, the Lord defend me, if you should, whilst you remain in my family, form any connexion of a *romantic* nature with any other man, ruin would be the consequence. —I will have no doings in my house that are not consistent with such decorum, that” — “Heavens! Madam, what doings have I been guilty of, to deserve these reproaches?” —I wept aloud.

Whether

Whether she thought I should be heard into Sir Charles's apartment, I know not; but she thought proper to *lower* her voice.—“ You are now child, tall, and—let me see—how old are you ?”

“ I am now turn'd of sixteen.”

“ Well—Mr. Grimston and I have been consulting about you, and we think (that is *I* do, which is the same thing) that if you was sent to a milliner in London, who is a distant cousin of Mr. Grimston's first wife, that you might, if you would renounce your *pen*, and stick to your needle, get into a genteel way of business.—I will write a recommendatory letter to her about you:—so pack up your things, for the sooner you go the better.—Indeed, child, you are much oblig'd to me for taking care of you in this matter.—Heavens!—I am sure I would not you should,

should, under *my* roof, have your conduct censur'd for a thousand worlds.—Really, the charge of such a young creature as you are, Fanny, upon one's spirits, is more than I can, or would undertake again.—Your person is not contemptible, for (looking in the glass) you have some —*something* of *my* features.—I cannot indeed answer for men:—you are young—and are extremely romantic—from your ridiculous manner of education.—I repeat, the case of such a young creature is *too much* for my poor weak spirits.—My scheme for you then, child, is this:—you may very easily go to London in the stage coach, which passes, every Wednesday, through the village of L——, a great thoroughfare, on the high road to London.—I can convey you, in my carriage, to that village;—for I shall make a morning visit on Wednesday,

nesday, to a lady, about two miles on this side of it:—and now I think of it, I can set you down at the turnpike-house, and it will be only a little walk for you to L——. I would not have you, child, walk from Grimston-House to the village, as it is near ten miles.—Let me see;—to-day is Monday;—to-morrow pack up your things,—and on Wednesday you shall set out.—I shall give you something to defray your expences.”

I did not once, my Lucy, interrupt my aunt in her long harangue: indeed nothing could equal my indignation at several parts of her cruel speech, but the joy I should so soon experience, in being fairly out of her clutches.—I saw *through* all her vile pretences;—and with that kind of *dignity* which always attends *offended* innocence, I told her I should certainly be ready to depart on Wednesday.

Lucy,

* * * * *

Tuesday night.

Lucy, what a scene have I to relate!—I will endeavour to give it you, as well as my present half-distracted thoughts will permit me to do.

My aunt, by the desire of Sir Charles, drank her tea this afternoon in his apartment.—Poor I follow'd of course;—though I perceiv'd the good lady wanted to invent some pretence for my absence; such as, “I suppose, Frances, you are so busy packing up your *small* wardrobe, you cannot find time to drink tea:”—but Sir Charles, it seems, ask'd for me, and I went accordingly.—My cousins, I should say, were both gone to spend the day abroad.—But to come to the interesting point which has so distress'd me.

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Whilst we were drinking tea, my aunt begun :—" Well, to be sure, it is lovely weather ;—I hope, Fanny, we shall have as a fine a day to-morrow. Indeed *my* excursion is not far ;—but *you* will not get to the end of your journey before Friday, or Saturday ; for I think it is full a hundred and seventy miles."

Sir Charles started, and with astonishment interrupted my aunt,—whilst in a trembling voice he ask'd,—" What, Madam, is Miss Fanny going to leave us ?"

" She is going to London," replied my aunt.

" To London ?"—he exclaim'd.—And, O my dear, so great was his emotion, that the tea-cup almost fell from his hand.—I was frightened almost to death, lest my aunt should perceive his flutter, but happily she was busied in making tea.

“ Yes”—said she,—“ it is high time she should begin to think of some way of getting a livelihood.—To be sure, it will be a long journey for the girl, but she must do as other poor, indigent young women, who have neither parents or portion—she must apply to her needle.”

Sir Charles stifled a sigh,—and with a look to me, which pierc’d my soul,—“ Good Heaven! Mrs. Grimston, what a journey for so young a person *alone*!—Has she friends in town?”

My aunt was just going to reply, when a servant that moment came to call her out of the room, on some particular business.

I was now, Lucy, alone with Sir Charles.—A silence, for some moments, followed.—I sat trembling,—and hardly durst lift my eyes to the most amiable of men.—I just stole one glance, when I observ’d the most
evident

evident marks of confusion in his fine face, blended with an air of sorrow. But O my Lucy, what were my emotions, when he took my hand,—and, with a tone of voice which thrill'd my heart,—said, “ You are going to leave us!—is it—can it be?”

I stammer'd out,—“ Yes Sir—it—must—must needs be so,—I would wish, indeed, to be no longer a burthen to this family.”—I burst into tears, for my heart was full.

He press'd my hand to his lips, whilst a pitying tear stole down his manly cheek.—Yes, my dear friend, my hand was wet with the tears of Sir Charles Belford :—then, lifting up his eyes to Heaven, with the most emphatic energy he exclaim'd, “ Gracious God——protect this lovely
“ *maid!* ye guardian angels, who
“ watch over helpless innocence,
“ make her your choicest care—direct

“ her steps—lead her to virtue here
 “ and happiness hereafter.”

I was astonish'd at the solemn manner in which he spoke.—“ O Miss
 “ Belton,” he continu'd, “ I could
 “ tell you a tale—which would—but
 “ I will not distress that tender bosom.—But, O Heaven! were it not,
 “ that I am bound by unfurmountable ties of—O rigid honour—gratitude—”

I now rose;—and, terrified lest my aunt should return, and see us both in tears, I thought it best to leave the room.—Sir Charles seem'd as if some mighty secret was labouring in his breast.

“ O Miss Fanny—may *you* be happy; *whilst*—” —He caught my hand once more to his lips.—“ Adieu, Sir,” said I, “ I must go down to my aunt. —I shall see Sir Charles Belford no more.—A thousand thanks for—for

—your compassion : may your health be soon re-establish'd, and may happiness be your portion."—I curtsied, and withdrew, though hardly able to totter out of the room : I look'd back at the door, when I saw him clasp his hands—exclaiming, " O God !"—He directly put his handkerchief to his eyes, and I shut the door.

How I got up into my own room, I hardly know, for thither I repair'd : I thought my heart would burst ;—I flung myself into a chair, and sat for some minutes in a kind of stupor :—at last a shower of tears wonderfully reliev'd me.—Good Heavens ! said I, is it possible Sir Charles Belford—can love the poor distressed Fanny ?—How delicate was his concern for my hapless situation ! How refin'd the affection of *such* a heart as *his* !—I then, my Lucy, almost wish'd I had stayed a few minutes longer in his apartment,

K 3

ment, to have heard the *tale* he mention'd *he could tell me*.

Surely, said I, I was in mighty haste to depart:—what *barn* could have ensu'd? I might certainly have staid till my aunt came up again:—how foolish to fly up stairs!—He uttered something about honour and gratitude:—foolish Fanny, why did you not stay to hear what he had to say?

Thus, my dear, did I torment myself:—and to say the truth, for I never conceal even a thought from you, I would have given worlds to have recall'd again those few moments in the apartment of Sir Charles.

Well, said I, starting up, to-morrow I leave him for ever!—A few more tears then fill'd my eyes,—which I endeavour'd to wipe away, and set about my little business of packing.—My wardrobe is but slender—my
books

books and manuscripts are my choicest treasure :—for, notwithstanding my aunt's advice to *quit* my pen, I shall certainly, (such is my love for letters) if I have opportunity in London, more closely adhere to them than ever : of such weight are my dear father's instructions, join'd with my own natural inclinations for scribbling.

To-morrow, my friend, I leave Grimston-House. Glad, I certainly am, of this opportunity of getting so fairly away from this unkind family ; and yet—Lucy, I don't know the meaning of it, my heart is so—heavy —“ Ah ! treacherous deceiver, I will take thee severely to task !”—You, my dear, now shake that little sagacious head of thine, and tell me, “ you know the source of my *heaviness*.”—Well—be it so.—I will now close this long epistle—my next will be dated

K 4 perhaps

perhaps on the road to, or in London.

I had wrote thus far, and was going to throw aside my pen,—when I heard Mrs. Monson knock softly at my door. On my opening it, she told me, Sir Charles had sent a small manuscript he had of mine:—on which she gave me a piece of paper seal'd up, and retir'd.—With trembling hands I open'd it;—inclos'd, was my ode to Solitude,—and a billet from himself, in which was a beautiful brilliant diamond ring.—I was extremely amaz'd: the billet was this:

“ Sir Charles Belford, begs Miss Belton would accept the enclosed trifle; and if she will pardon this liberty, it will add to the favour of her accepting it: this ring, he entreats she will wear as a small token of remem-

remembrance of, her most sincere friend,

C. B."

You may be certain, I cannot accept this present:—no, indeed my dear:—all trembling as I was, with this unlook'd-for proof of his esteem, I instantly took my pen, and having carefully again folded up the ring, wrote this short billet:

“ Fanny Belton cannot sufficiently express her gratitude to Sir Charles Belford, for his most genteel present; but must decline the acceptance of what she cannot possibly deserve:—neither can she require any *token*, to *preserve* a remembrance of that generous friend, she will never forget.”

I enclos'd the ring, and seal'd up the paper; and hearing Mrs. Mon-

K 5

son

son on the stairs, I softly call'd her, and begg'd her to give that immediately into the hands of Sir Charles Belford.—I told her it was some verses I had of his. This the good woman did not wonder at, as I had very frequently sent books and little manuscripts to him, by her.—When she saw the preparations for my departure to-morrow, she shook her head.

“ Ah ! Lord blefs you—poor—poor young creature !—my heart bleeds for you—to think, as I may say, of your being sent up to London, and no friend with you !—One would imagine my mistress wanted to ruin you at once.—Such a sweet young woman to be sent into the world alone !”

“ Hush—hush, said I,—you say I have *no friend*—you forget, surely, that I have the Almighty Ruler of the
uni-

universe for my guide and protector :—that powerful guardian of helpless innocence :—he will shield me—I have no fears.”

She wip'd a tear from her cheek.

“ Ah good, young creature!—my poor daughter Patty had just such eyes ! Well ! she is in heaven.—Pray Miss Fanny don't be offended, but keep this little snuff-box for my sake.”

Surely, thought I, *presents* come fast this evening upon me.—I accepted *her* kind token of friendship, though I could not that of poor Sir Charles.—Poor Sir Charles!—Well—let it pass.—And in return I presented the worthy woman with a little seal I had in my pocket.

“ I must now go down,” said she, “ and get the good young gentleman's bed ready.—He seems in sad pain with his poor arm this evening,

—and quite heavy-hearted about the wound in his knee.—God blefs you, Miss Fanny:—I could fay a great deal about your being fent off in this manner;—but I am *now* but a fervant, and muft be filent.—If every body had their deserts, fome people would not go unpunished.”—Away ſhe tript.

I will now pofitively conclude this enormous packet.—But firft let me beg your opinion of my billet to Sir Charles.—Is it not too free?—ah! Lucy what a heart has that man! and how miserable at prefent, on *ſome* accounts, is your friend!—A few more tears *will* flow, in ſpite of reſolution:—and now I will go to bed.

Adieu! your ſincere

F. B.

P. S.

P. S. “What more?” you say.
—A few words only.—My aunt told Sir Charles this afternoon, she should leave her daughters to attend him tomorrow.—How odious is her *forwardness* about those girls!—But it is time to throw aside my pen, lest it flow with *gall*, instead of ink. Now indeed I *have* done.

L E T T E R XIV.

Town of W—, May 10.

O My dear Lucy, I have a most miserable adventure to relate! —but don't be too much alarm'd, as, I thank heaven, I am in perfect health:—and setting aside that I have been terrified almost to death on my road to this place, and have at this present writing but one poor shilling in the world, I am as well as can be expected.—Alas! my dear, I have
been

been robb'd by two highwaymen this evening, on my road hither;—guess my terror.—But I will try to give you an account of this frightful affair as well as I am able:—and first, to lead to it, I will begin with this morning, when I left *Grimston-House*.

About nine o'clock, my aunt sent for me into her chamber, and with great state presented me with a ten pound note, to bear my expences to London, and for *pocket money* there:—she cruelly enough said, “when this sum is expended, you may *print your tragedy*.”—She gave me a letter of recommendation to a Mrs. Bennet, a milliner, of Jermyn-street, Piccadilly, London, with whom I am to work for my bread for three years. My aunt's chariot was at the gate at ten o'clock, and down stairs we went.—My heart was more *soften'd* than I will confess, on my passing by Sir Charles's

Charles's apartment:—Ah, sighed I, most amiable of men, do not quite forget poor Fanny Belton!

On my passing through the passage that led to the door, I was wonderfully affected with the kind behaviour of the poor servants, who had always been exceedingly good.—They every one ran out to have a last peep at me.—“God bless you, dear Miss Fanny,” said one;—“I’ll pray for you,” said another.—One would have imagin’d I had been going to the East-Indies at least, so adventurous, or rather dangerous, did this journey to London appear to a set of honest country servants, who had never perhaps been five miles from that spot. The poor old house dog, whom I had always caress’d, follow’d me wagging his tail:—I stroak’d his head;—and the good old gardener Jacob gave me a kind nod.—We were now got to
the

the side of the chariot; I just cast my eye up to Sir Charles's windows, where I saw him stand, supported by his servant, pale and emaciated.—O Heavens!—what were my emotions!—He bow'd. I made an awkward half curtesy, and stepp'd into the chariot, in which my aunt had seated herself with great state.—I could not help shedding tears.—Was it not the kindness of the servants in taking their leave of me, which so lower'd my spirits?—I would fain believe it was.

“ Ah Fanny!” you cry, “ no more of these believings.”

But indeed, my dear, ascribe what cause you will for my tears, I certainly was in a situation which demanded them.—A young creature, destitute,—helpless,—an orphan, cast out into an unpitying world,—by a merciless relation,—had I not cause for weeping?—But my aunt soon

rous'd

rous'd me from my tears in this stern manner:—"And had you really the ridiculous vanity and folly, to suppose that Sir Charles Belford made that bow from his window to *you* child?—by your returning the compliment, I suppose you thought so.—It was to *me*, I fancy, and not to such a little insignificant—as yourself, that his polite compliment was intended.—On my word, you have an amazing deal of pride, as well as assurance."—Then Lucy, there follow'd such an harangue, on modesty, pride, pertness, vanity, and at length *virtue*, that it fairly lasted for two hours, in which time we reach'd the turnpike; at which place your poor Fanny was to be set down, on the high road. A boy, who had the care of my boxes, &c. was order'd to walk on, as fast as possible to the inn at L——, that he might return back directly.

directly.—The chariot door was now open'd; and I alighted.

“ You cannot,” said my *kind* aunt, “ lose your way—walk on in this great road, and the next village is L——. I have told you at what inn you are to go to meet the coach;—and so, child, I wish you a good journey.”

Away she drove, and I saw no more of her.

O my Lucy, does not your gentle heart tremble for my situation?—Alone, unprotected!—I stood a few moments in the road, then lifting up my eyes to Heaven, Gracious God! said I, look down and protect an helpless orphan.

The day being warm, I walk'd on slowly; and if my heart had been at ease, could have been pleas'd with the melody of the birds, and with the various beauties of nature, which
at

at this sweet season of the year, our bountiful Maker so lavishly pours around.

I had not walk'd, or rather fauntered on many yards, lost in deep contemplation, when stooping down to gather a wild little purple flower of uncommon beauty, among the weeds and grass, close to the path, I descry'd, to my great surprise, a small green silk purse, which appear'd to have been dropp'd by accident.—I took it up, and in opening it found, to my amazement, forty guineas in new gold.—Imagine my surprise.—I was, however, determined, when I arriv'd at the inn, to enquire if any person had mention'd so great a loss in dropping such a sum. Though the road was very much frequented, being a great thoroughfare to London, I had not yet met any one person whatever.—But I
soon

soon after saw a clergyman—for so he appear'd by his dress—and a young lady at some little distance.—I observ'd they came over a meadow on the opposite side of the road.—They soon overtook me, and we now walk'd on in the same path.—The good man survey'd me; and doubtless with surprise, to see a young creature alone on the public road.—His benevolent aspect,—and venerable grey locks, made me fancy he resembled my dear parent.—The young lady too attracted my eye, by her modest deportment, and the neatness of her dress.

After a few minutes silence,—the gentleman politely accosted me, and ask'd if I was going to the next village:—I replied in the affirmative. We then began talking on the beauties of the prospect,—and I soon, by his conversation, found he was the rector of a neighbouring parish, and
had

had been taking with his daughter a little morning walk.

Ah! thought I, whilst the tear of fond remembrance started to my eye, such us'd to be my former delightful amusement, as this happy young lady experiences, in attending the best of fathers!

I thought this good man would be a proper person to enquire of, if he had heard, in that neighbourhood, of the loss of a purse—on which I related the incident of my having just found a large sum of money.—I took it out of my pocket, and ask'd this gentleman what method he could best advise me to pursue to restore it to the right owner.

“Truly,” he replied, “my advice is, that as you found it, you have an undoubted right to keep it;—it is honestly your own, therefore you can
have

have no scruples, not knowing to whom it belongs, in using the sum.

“ I shall be unhappy,” said I,
“ till I can hear of the real owner.”

“ Indeed, young lady,” said he,
“ my opinion is, that it is very honestly your own—therefore be easy.”

Much more conversation of this kind past, and at length we saw the village. A little before we enter’d upon it, my agreeable companions stopt at a handsome house, and we parted.

I now proceeded on to the inn, which was a very large one.

I was shown into a handsome parlour, and got my little luggage safe; but, to my great mortification, heard the stage-coach always pass’d by there at eight o’clock in the morning, instead of the middle of the day.—This circumstance, my dear, my aunt must

must certainly know;—but she had the artifice not to carry me herself to the inn; as in that case she would have been under a necessity of taking me home again, as the coach only passes once a week.—Unkind woman!—I was, however, inform'd, that I might very easily, by a return'd post-chaise, which was expected in the afternoon, be convey'd to the capital town of W——, from whence every day a coach set out for London: I therefore began to be in better spirits, and order'd my little dinner;—and *girl-like*, vain, and foolish, whilst the waiter was coming backwards and forwards, with his apparatus for laying the table-cloth, &c. I could not help, as I sat by the table, taking out the purse of money I had found. I took out every guinea, and examin'd them severally.—I had never, my dear, seen such a
parcel

parcel of bright gold at once together:—and let me tell you, Lucy, whatever pretty things the philosophers advance to make us *despise* this shining metal, it certainly is a very necessary ingredient in life.—I rang'd the guineas on the table,—I counted them over, admir'd the noble dignity in the countenance of our most gracious sovereign impress'd on the coin,—and then, in imagination, ran over a thousand pretty things I might do with this money.

Whilst I was indulging these pleasing reflections, I observ'd the waiter to *eye* the shining store:—and (O the vanity of the human heart, Lucy!) I even wish'd he might see it; thinking I should be look'd upon as a person of *consequence*.—The dinner being brought in, I let the money remain on the table.

“O

“ O thou proud little wretch !” methinks I hear you cry.—Indeed this vanity can only be pardonable in a girl of sixteen, as entirely unacquainted with the world as if she had been bred in the wilds of America.—But to proceed.

The waiter, on the sight of all this treasure, I soon found paid me most extraordinary respect.—He retir’d behind my chair; and it was easy to observe by his assiduities, and bows, whenever I spoke to him, that he thought me *somebody*.—I ate my mutton-chop in great state,—and recollect I gave myself some vain airs. I had, on my first ordering my little pittance for dinner on my arrival, fancied this young man had paid but little attention to my orders:—but *now* it was different;—he bow’d at every word,—and desir’d to know if I would *please* to have some jellies, or

VOL. I. L whipt

whipt fillabubs—or some other elegant things which he mentioned.

“Why no”—said I, leaning back with an air of pride;—“no—I think not.”

Whilst he was removing the things off the table, I put up the money carelessly in my purse, which I sat playing with in my hand.—I saw he observ’d me,—which abundantly *gratified* my *vanity*:—but alas! this very vanity of mine, was the cause of a dreadful accident, as you shall hear in due order.

Soon after dinner, the landlady of the inn (who had not *before* made her appearance, but now by the report of the waiter, doubtless found her guest of too much consequence to be neglected) came curtsying into the room, and with many compliments hop’d my dinner was drest to my liking, &c.

After

After satisfying her on that head, I told her I should go that afternoon to W——, which was, she inform'd me, nine miles.—“ But dear Miss,” said this complaisant lady, “ the weather is so warm, you will be quite *broil'd* to go so early :—you will stay, I imagine, to drink tea.—It will be a delightful ride for you in the cool of the evening.” To this proposal I foolishly assented, and order'd tea at six :—soon after which, an opportunity of a chaise offering, I with a fine air got into it, the *bowing* waiter attending, and out I set, my boxes lash'd on before the carriage.

Surely, my Lucy, there is something in the idea of *liberty* wonderfully delightful to human kind ; I really at that period felt myself *happy* :—I sigh'd indeed, however, when I thought of *one* person at Grimston-

L 2

House.

House.—I leave you to guess who.
—But to proceed.

The evening was remarkably fine,
—the prospects on all sides beautiful,
—and I began to think of my *riches*
again. My aunt's bank note, added
to my purse, made me mistress of fifty
pounds.—What a sum! to me it
appear'd inexhaustible.—Besides this
treasure, I had about three guineas
of my own, which had been left of
the purchase-money of my dear father's
library, &c.

Full of the thoughts of my riches,
the time insensibly past; and by the
road stones I observ'd we had already
travelled seven miles. The evening
began to draw on, and it growing
apace into twilight, I told the driver
(who proved to be a civil fellow)
that I was fearful it would be quite
dark before we reached W——. He
told me I had no occasion to have
any

any fears, and that he would drive on briskly.

I drew up one of the glasses, and began again to contemplate how I should lay out my sum of money to the best advantage; when I observ'd two men on horseback crossing the road, and making directly up to the chaise. They bade the driver stop; and immediately rode up to the window, at which one tapp'd with a pistol, (O Lucy, do you not shudder for me?) whilst the other suddenly opened the opposite door of the chaise.—What was my terror at that dreadful moment, can only be *imagin'd*, not *describ'd*. I could not scream—my faculties were in a manner absorb'd in consternation;—but I thank Heaven I did not faint.

“Your money,—your money this instant;”—said the villain, holding the pistol close to my breast.

“O God!”—said I—“this time—this one time protect me!”

“D—n you,” said the other shocking wretch to his comrade, “why do you not rifle her?”

I put my hand in my pocket,—but that would not do:—he forcibly thrust his hand himself into my pocket, in which he tore out the purse of money, and the pocket-book in which I had put the bank bill my aunt had given me;—and not content with all this, he turn’d my pockets inside out, and took (what griev’d my soul) the little ivory box you Lucy gave me for a *keepsake* on your departure, in which were my three guineas I before mention’d to you.—In short, they took every thing I had in my pockets, and what silver I had to the amount of near half a guinea, besides all the rest.

“You

“ You have more,” said they,
“ *we know you have.*”—I protested
not.—The driver spoke.

“ For mercy’s sake, gentlemen,
don’t terrify the poor young lady so.”

“ D—n you,” said the first horrid
wretch, “ if you say another word,
I’ll blow your brains out.”

“ Why don’t you,” said the other,
“ take her out, and rifle her pockets?”
O how I scream’d!—However, they
desisted from farther violence, but
swore dreadfully *they knew* I must
have more money.—I declar’d I had
not another farthing.—“ Thus desti-
tute as you have left me, for God’s
sake, gentlemen, consider how I am
to pursue my journey.—Take pity
on me.”

“ There then,” said the first fel-
low, “ take that—(throwing me two
shillings) take that to pay the turn-
pike, and go to the devil.—But

hearkee (turning back again) you are young,—and I'll give you a word of advice:—never for the future display your *money* in a public inn."

Away they rode on a full gallop. I observ'd (for it was light enough for that) that they were both mounted on good horses, and drest like gentlemen.

The instant they were gone off, the poor driver came to me, and begg'd me to try to compose myself.

"Consider Miss," said he, "what a blessing it is they did not take off your trunk from the chaise, which I expected every moment they would do.—I verily believe," continued he, "that I saw these very two men in the inn at L——."

To be sure, Lucy, I may thank my own ridiculous vanity and folly for this disaster. I now suppose, as the poor driver says, these fellows
were

were at the inn; and no doubt but the waiter, before whom I so vainly display'd my money, made a report of my treasure: this was natural for him to do, without being in the least their associate.—In short, I may thank myself, my own *vanity*, I repeat, for this miserable misfortune.—However, I thank Heaven I met with no farther accident, and arriv'd safely at the large town of W——, and was drove into a very handsome inn,—the driver immediately proclaiming the robbery that had been committed upon me.—I alighted, trembling still after my late fright, and was surrounded by several people, who came out with candles, and expressed great pity for me.—Among them was the landlady of the inn (quite a fine lady in dress)—she took my hand.

“ Ah poor young lady,” said she,
—“ how I pity you! Good God!

L 5

robb'd!

robb'd!—Here, Susan,—Betty, get the star bed-chamber ready this moment.—Heavens! poor lady, how you tremble!”

She led me very tenderly into a handsome parlour, and ran herself for hartshorn and water, of which I drank a draught, for indeed I stood in need of it.—A shower of tears then came to my relief, on which my spirits were a little eas'd.—The landlady stood over me with the utmost compassion. Doubtless she then look'd on me in the light of some young lady of fashion, as I was very neatly dress'd.—The master of the house came in, as did I believe, every other person in the house; all expressing great sorrow for my loss, both by looks and words.

And here I must remark, Lucy, that whatever Virtues the good people of England may want, I do not think

think Compassion is of the number.
—But perhaps you will ascribe all this to *curiosity*.

“What, Madam,” said my host,
“what was the sum the villains robb’d you of?” — “Above fifty pounds,” — answered I, with a heavy sigh.

“Good God (said he) — a great sum — a great sum indeed. — Poor young lady!” He then retir’d, concluding, I suppose, I was a person of fortune, by having such a sum in my pocket. — Alas! little was it imagined, I had lost my *all*!

“What, my dear young lady,” said my hostess, “shall I get for your supper? — a boil’d chicken, or what?”

I said I could not eat.

“Indeed you must,” — said she. —
“Susan, order the cook to fricasee a chicken, — and get some tarts — or a lobster: — and, Madam, you shall have

some white wine whey, when you go to bed:—it will be very proper for you.—You still tremble.”

I declar’d again I could neither eat, nor drink.—Indeed, Lucy, the dreadful idea that I had only one shilling now in my pocket, (for I had given *Jerry*, as they call’d the poor driver, my other shilling) induced me to say this.—And now my miserable situation appear’d to me in all its horrors.—I intended, however, you may be sure, to lay my whole deplorable case before the landlady, so soon as my spirits were a little recovered from their flurry.

“ For Heaven’s sake,” said this kind gentlewoman, in whose looks I thought I saw great benevolence* ;—
“ make yourself easy :—to-morrow we will send to your *friends*,—and all

* Whether our young traveller had any skill in physiognomy, a short time will shew.

will be well:—or shall I dispatch a messenger to-night?”

O Lucy, what then did I feel!—alas! I had no friend!—This I was preparing to tell her, as well as of my very deplorable state, when a servant that instant enter'd the room, to inform his mistress that Lord C—'s coach and six—and Sir William F—'s family, were all that moment arriv'd, and would spend the night there, on their road to London.—My landlady, Mrs. P—, it must be imagin'd, was oblig'd to leave me, to attend her noble guests.

“ Good gracious!” said she, —
“ and not a couple of chickens in the house!—Run and bid the cook kill a dozen, we must do the best we can with them.”—Then turning to me very kindly, “ Well! my good young lady, I fear I shall be so hurried all this evening, it will not be in my

my power to see you again :—so good night”—and kiss'd my cheek—was not this kind my dear ?—“ I shall order your supper directly ;—and Susan, the upper chamber-maid, shall attend you to your bed.—Make yourself quite easy,—you are now safe,—as safe as if you was in your own father's house.”—Away she tript, and I burst into tears.”

“ My father's house ! (exclaimed I, wringing my hands) I have no father !—no friend !—A miserable orphan, destitute of every comfort, and thrown upon the wide world !”—You will imagine, my dear Lucy, what a dismal interval I spent, when left to my sad reflections.

In about an hour, a waiter brought in an elegant little supper.—My God ! thought I, what am I to do ?—I however sat down to it.

“ Pray,

“ Pray, Madam,” said the man, bowing, “ what *wine* do you chuse ?” “ I really cannot drink any thing to night,”—answered I in a sorrowful tone.

“ Do you chuse a glass of champagne, made into *negus* ?—Indeed, Madam, it would be of service to your spirits after your dreadful fright:—and pray, do try to eat.”

I took a mouthful or two,—but declin’d drinking any thing for a very obvious reason ; indeed I was almost distracted, as it was very apparent these people all look on me from my dress and appearance, and my arriving in a handsome chaise, &c. as some person of consequence.

At ten o’clock I was tormented again by the civilities of a very neat-looking chamber-maid.—I say *tormented*, for can there be a sharper sting to poverty like mine, than to have

have a set of well-meaning people assiduously attending us, when we are conscious it is not in our power to reward them?—But to proceed with my mortifying tale.

Mrs. Susan usher'd me up stairs, carrying two lights before me, in great state, as if she were conducting a Dutcheß,—whither poor I follow'd, looking, I doubt not, extremely foolish.—My guide flung open the door of a very handsome bed-chamber, furnish'd elegantly, and in which, my Lucy, I now am.—The maid desir'd I would give her leave to assist me in undressing; but upon my telling her I requir'd no assistance, she civilly withdrew.—I then set down directly, and wrote thus far to my Lucy.—But oh! my dear, what am I to do!—I am almost at my wits end.—It is now past eleven—and I must prepare to go to bed;—fatigued
almost

almost to death; my mind in a state of the most dreadful inquietude; for Heaven's sake, Lucy, I repeat, what am I to do?—A single shilling only in my pocket—but somebody taps at my door.

Who should it be but the careful Mrs. Susan, with a basin of white wine whey.—Another *mortification* you see.—She told me I *must* drink it. “My mistress, Madam,” said she, “begs her compliments, wishes you a good night, and will *wait* on you in the morning.”

Lucy, I am quite oppress'd with the civilities of these good people.—Alas! little do they guess, I am an absolute beggar!

What course can I take for the best?—As to returning again to my cruel aunt, that will never do.—No—no—I will sooner work these fingers to the bone.—Bless me, my dear,
what

what an expence have I already incurred in this house!—How unfortunate was it that the mistress of it was call'd away, in the instant I was going to begin my pitiable story!—Well! to-morrow morning, please Heaven, the very moment I see her, I'll tell her all. I doubt not of her compassion, of which she has already given me proofs.—I saw the strongest traces of piety and benevolence in the countenance of this good woman.—How narrow-minded is that old maxim my dear, that *inn-keepers* are the most fordid race of people in the world!—no—the behaviour of good Mrs. P—destroys that proverb. I will, after making known to her all my misfortunes, desire her assistance in getting me either into some family in this large town, or else some employment to get my bread.—In this hope I will
lay

lay down my tired pen.—It is now deep midnight.

“ Come sweet patience,
“ That calm relief, the ruling hand of Heaven,
“ Alone to suff’ring innocence has given.

Once more good night.

F. B.

LETTER XV.

Town of Daventry, on the road to London, May 15.

FOUR days, my friend, have past, since thy poor Fanny finish’d her last letter.—Indeed I have not been able to recollect my scatter’d thoughts, such scenes of disappointment and anxiety have I experienc’d, within these last eight and forty hours!—But to begin with an account of my situation, from where I concluded in my last letter, I should say,
that

that the following morning, determin'd to implore the protection of my hostess, I rang the bell.—The chamber-maid instantly brought in my breakfast.—I told her I begg'd to see her mistress, but she prevented my message, by herself coming to enquire how I did, and how I rested.

“ I hope,” said she, “ now you are a little compos'd, you will let me have the pleasure of informing your parents and friends, that you are safe under my roof at W——.—* Dear heart—how glad will they be to hear I can restore you to them again!—Well now Miss—if you will tell me where to send—we will have a man and horse ready:—or perhaps, you

* In fact, all the care and attention this gentlewoman shew'd our poor heroine, was only to make a *merit* of it to her parents and friends, and to be rewarded accordingly: though the innocent Miss Belton, unhacknied in the ways of the world, ascrib'd it to compassion.

will

will like to write a line to your parents—or friends.—Shall I call for pens and ink?

I could hear no more—but bursting into tears, “O good Madam, I have no parents!—”

“Well, Miss”—interrupted she with quickness—“if not, you have certainly friends I presume.”

“I have not a friend”—said I, sobbing—“in the world:—at least not in this part of the globe.”—For I could not forget I had *still* my Lucy.

“That is very *strange* indeed,”—replied she, throwing herself into a chair;—“I am greatly surpriz’d, indeed Miss—I am quite——”

“Your goodness,” said I, “to a poor, unfortunate—helpless—orphan, who was indeed robb’d yesterday of her little *all*,—Heaven will reward you for.”

“Well

“ Well—well”—said she *coolly*—
 “ I suppose it was *true* that you *was*
robb'd,—*because* the driver said so.—
 No friends!—you astonish me!—pray
 what is your name?—I suppose that
 is no *secret*.”

“ No Madam,”—said I, weeping,
 —“ I have no secrets.—I lost an ex-
 cellent father.”—And then briefly
 gave her an account of my having
 been some time with a relation who
 had us'd me very unkindly;—and
 that now I was going to London,
 when the accident of being robb'd had
 depriv'd me of all my cash, and re-
 duc'd me to the greatest necessity.—
 “ And oh Madam,”—continued I,
 weeping bitterly,—“ my distress is
 such, that unless—”

“ Good God!”—interrupted she—
 “ what am I to think of all this?—
 A young creature travelling about the
 country, in this manner, by herself!
 —I

—I should rather imagine you have some intrigue upon your hands—some love affair!—Going to London, indeed!—I should be sorry to entertain suspicious thoughts,—but you are a stranger to me.—And so you really, *before this strange story of your being robb'd*, was a person in distress?—mercy on me!—how one may be deceiv'd!—I really, from your dress and appearance, imagin'd you a young lady of good family and fashion:—but now-a-days girls mind only dress. — And what, for Heaven's sake, did you intend to do in London?"

“ To work, Madam, for my livelihood.—And oh let me intreat,—let me beg you to enquire for some family that would take me on the footing of a servant. Oh Madam, consider my distress!—Indeed I have only a single shilling in the world.”

“ In-

“ Indeed ! ” — reddening with anger — “ what are you a beggar then ? — *I* recommend ‘ you to some family ! not I indeed. I know nothing of you, — nor your real story : — you may perhaps have told me some trump’d up tale. — Mercy on me ! — I cannot encourage such. — I am the mother of children, and know the world better. ”

I was, my Lucy, so extremely shock’d at the bare-fac’d inhumanity, I may call it, of this woman, that I was quite thunderstruck. — Before I could reply, she look’d round at my boxes — “ What have you in those boxes ? — if you have not money, I suppose you have something *there* which will *make* money. — Indeed I must be paid my bill, — get the money how you may. — There are so many young creatures like yourself, — *adventurers*, — that, in short, one cannot be too cautious. ”

— On

On this I arose, with all that honest pride which never fails attending offended, or suspected innocence.

I flew to my box, took out a very handsome blue tabby gown of my dear mother's, which I had intended, when out of my present mourning dress, to have had alter'd for my own wear; and a pair of laced ruffles, likewise, of that long-lost parent, which I had always carefully preserv'd, as they were her wedding ruffles.—I say, I took out these things, and laying them on the bed—"Yes, Madam,"—said I—"I will sooner sell every thing I have—than any person shall lose a farthing by me."

"Well"—said the fordid wretch,—"I'll send for a purchaser for your things—and in the mean time I will write out your bill."—Saying which, she retir'd.

And now, my dear friend, you will perhaps wonder, that, in order to prevent my being driven to the extremity of selling these things, and of preserving my appearance and credit, I had not at once own'd that I was niece to Mr. Grimston, whose name, fortune, &c. must be certainly known at W——. No, Lucy; I was absolutely determin'd not to mention that family, or that I had the least relation to it: for if I had, the consequence inevitably would have been this; that most probably I must have been under the fatal necessity of returning again to those cruel, purse-proud people.—No—no—I never will.—I would rather encounter the utmost extremes of poverty, than submit to their insolence again.—It is not, my friend, the hard bed, nor the homely board, which inflicts the sharpest

sharpest stings of indigence:—no,

“ ’Tis the whips and *scorns* which

“ Patient merit, of th’ unworthy takes.”

Besides, I had *another* reason, why I would not *return* to Grimston-House.

—The most amiable of men is there.

—Your poor Fanny, I fear, is not indifferent to him,—but as his exalted station renders an union betwixt us impossible, it is certainly some degree of prudence to avoid his presence.

A little old, ill-looking woman now arriv’d, who told me she was come to purchase some things Mrs. P— had told her I had to dispose of. —I presented the gown and ruffles, which she examined in profound silence, and after much hard *baggling* on *her* part, agreed to give me only seven guineas for the whole.—It griev’d me, my dear, I must confess, to part with these things; as so rich a tabby, and such fine lace, would have been

your poor Fanny's best suits for many a year to come; but what could I do? — This affair being settled, the woman walk'd off with her purchase.

I still intended to pursue my scheme of going to London, as luckily I had put my aunt's commendatory letter into my trunk, by which means it was saved from the highwaymen's search, as they only rifled my pockets.

The chamber-maid now brought up my bill, which amounted to the exorbitant sum of eighteen shillings. After having paid it, I enquir'd what time the coach to London set out, and was inform'd in an hour's time. You may be convinced I was glad to get away from a house of such extortion; and the coach soon being ready to set off, I walk'd down stairs, on which I happen'd to meet both the landlord and landlady, of the inn, who took no more notice of me than if I had
been

been one of their domestic animals : so much had my *poverty* lower'd me in their estimation.—I sigh'd, that moment, for the *pride* of these fordid wretches.

I now was seated in the coach, in which I found a decent, good-looking woman, and two old gentlemen.—After having mutually enquir'd if we were all going to London, and being answer'd in the affirmative, a silence ensued for some miles ; after which the gentlemen fell into a discourse of politics, and other public matters, which was not unentertaining, as they appear'd sensible and well bred. Nothing farther past on this first day's journey than matters of mere civility : but a small incident happen'd yesterday which convinced me of the deplorable *vanity* of ~~the~~ *human heart*. The coach, soon after breakfast, stopt at a genteel looking house, out of which

which came an old gentelman leading a very pretty young lady, whom I imagine was his daughter. He took an affectionate leave of her, and put her in the coach.—She was to be set down at a town several miles distant. I think I never saw a greater impression of modesty and innocence, in any countenance.—She said little; and her whole behaviour was reserv'd and quite proper: for my part, I was delighted with the modest elegance of her manner. I could not have thought it possible, for any one to have *censur'd* her appearance. What then was my amazement, when at dinner (after we had parted from her) to hear one gentleman say to the other, “ That pretty girl we took up on the road, ey'd you very attentively, and ogled you, I think, in a manner that plainly indicated she had a design upon you.” “ D'ye think so? (said the other vainly

vainly smiling, who, as well as his companion, could not be less than sixty years of age) do you *really* think so?—I thought indeed she regarded us *both*, as very proper for her purpose.—Yes—yes—I saw—I observ'd. A female adventurer, no doubt.—Most likely she has been down during the races at D—— to pick up a little money."

"I rather think," said the other, "she has been in keeping with that old fellow, who conducted her to the coach.—A pretty girl—a fine girl:—and yet I don't think she had laid her red *on* so well, as some of them do."

My female companion, (who was a sensible woman) could no more than myself, bear to hear an innocent young creature thus scandaliz'd.—We both exclaim'd, "What, because she was handsome, does it follow she *must* be a woman of the town?" And
a long

a long altercation then ensu'd in which we could however make no alteration in the sentiments of these *vain* wretches.—Sure I am, that such *suspitions* could not arise from a *virtuous mind*. — Good Heaven! thought I, if these are the sentiments of *gentlemen* in the *world*, would I were among the poor peasants on the Welsh mountains.—But here I will close this epistle, for it is now twelve at night, and the coach sets out early in the morning. Adieu then.—My next will be from the great city, where we hope to arrive to-morrow.

Your's, my Lucy, ever,

FRANCES BELTON.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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